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MEMOIRS

OF

JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN,

PASTOR OF WALDBACH,

IN

THE BAN DE LA ROCHE.

PREPARED FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

REVISED BY THE EDITORS.

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MEMOIRS

OF

JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary remarks—Account of the Ban de la Roche —Its state previous to M. Stouber's time—Stouber's exertions there.

The memoirs of an individual, whose whole life has been devoted to pious and disinterested exertions for the temporal and spiritual good of mankind, have not unfrequently proved the means of awakening the desires, and strengthening the resolutions of others to follow him in his career of benevolence.

Such an individual was John Frederic Oberlin, a person whose indefatigable efforts for upward of fifty years, to benefit the simple villagers who constituted his flock, entitle him to universal esteem and admiration. The writer earnestly hopes that the recital of his labours may, under the divine blessing, tend to confirm the zealous and encourage the weak, and lead all who hear it to catch a portion of that sacred glow by which he was himself animated.

His character, as displayed in the uniform tenor of his life, presented a remarkable combination of varied excellences; for while much exalted sanctity and intrepid zeal were conspicuous, an unwearied ardour in doing good, and a habitual willingness to renounce his own interests to promote the well-being of his fellow-creatures, were equally evident. In addition to this, his extreme simplicity, conscientious integrity, sweetness of temper, and refinement of manner, caused him to be both ardently loved and sincerely revered; while his industry, his agricultural skill, his knowledge of rural and domestic economy, and the energy with which he carried his plans into effect the moment he was convinced of their utility, rendered him not only an example but a blessing to the people among whom he resided, and afforded a delightful proof of the advantages that may accrue from a union of secular and spiritual duties.

Before I proceed with my narrative, it will be proper to present the reader with some description of the Ban de la Roche, the scene of Oberlin's long and useful labours, and to state what had been previously effected there by his predecessor, M. Stouber, a Lutheran minister of congenial spirit with himself.

The Ban de la Roche, or Steinthal,* derives its name from a castle called *La Roche*, around

* *Steinthal* is the German name for the *Ban de la Roche*. Its literal signification is, *the Valley of Stone*.—Dr. Steinkopff.

which the Ban, or district, extends. It is a mountainous canton in the north-east of France, between Alsace and Lorraine, forming part of the declivities and western ramifications of the Haut Champ, or Champ de Feu, an isolated range of mountains, detached by a deep valley from the eastern boundary of the chain of the Vosges. It consists of two parishes: the one is Rothau; the other includes three churches, and five hamlets, which are almost exclusively inhabited by Lutherans. One of these hamlets is Waldbach, at which Oberlin resided on account of its central situation. It stands on the acclivity of the Champ de Feu,* (a mountain rising three thousand six hundred feet above the level of the sea, and evidently of volcanic origin,) and at the height of one thousand eight hundred feet: the road from Strasburg thither lies through the towns of Molsheim, Mutzig, and Schirmeck. Behind the little town of Schirmeck, the extensive and fertile valley in which it is situated separates into two smaller ones; the shaded vale of Framont on the right, and the Ban de la Roche, of which Rothau is the first and principal parish, on the left. The approach to the latter place is very romantic: the road winds down the side of a steep precipice, crosses a mountain torrent in the southern part of the valley, and rises again until the cottages of the peasantry, embosomed in plantations of pine, or under overhanging rocks, become visible.

* Field of fire.

The hamlet of Foudai, about two miles distant from Rothau, occupies an almost equally picturesque situation. It is succeeded by Walbach, whose tapering spire and straw-thatched cottages are surrounded by orchards of pear and cherry trees, and by the intermingled foliage of the alder, the ash, and the sallow. The temperature varies according to the height and position of the districts on the summits of the mountains: the climate is as intensely cold as at Quebec or St. Petersburgh; though in the valleys below it is mild as is the climate of Virginia and North Carolina. The winter months usually commence in September; and the snow remains undissolved until the following May or June. The products of the country vary with its elevation; the highest parts are, however, cultivated, though they yield so little that it is said the wife can carry home in her apron all the hay her husband has mown in a long morning. The harvest differs in time as well as in quantity, being later as you ascend.

This territory had been, during many years, the seat of bloody conflicts, which had almost rendered it an uninhabitable desert. About eighty or a hundred families earned a scanty subsistence, but, being destitute of all the comforts of life, they lived in extreme misery and degradation; liberty of conscience was, however, ensured to them, and when M. Stouber arrived among them, and began to preach the glad tidings of the gospel, he found that he might do so without molestation. There were,

nevertheless, many obstacles to impede the progress of truth, in consequence of the extreme wretchedness and deplorable ignorance of the people.

The following anecdote will convey some idea of the state of the parish on his first arrival there. Desiring to be shown the principal school-house, he was conducted into a miserable cottage, where a number of children were crowded together without any occupation, and in so wild and noisy a state that it was with some difficulty he could gain any reply to his inquiries for the master.

"There he is," said one of them, as soon as silence could be obtained, pointing to a withered old man, who lay on a little bed in one corner of the apartment.

"Are you the schoolmaster, my good friend?" inquired Stouber.

"Yes, sir."

"And what do you teach the children?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing!—how is that?"

"Because," replied the old man, with characteristic simplicity, "I know nothing myself."

"Why, then, were you instituted schoolmaster?"

"Why, sir, I had been taking care of the Waldbach pigs for a great number of years, and when I got too old and infirm for that employment, they sent me here to take care of the children."

The schools in the other villages were of

the same description. The schoolmasters were shepherds, who in summer tended their flocks, and in winter taught the little they knew to the children. Many of them could not read fluently, and very few knew how to write; they taught without method, and their schools were not even supplied with elementary books.

Stouber's first step, therefore, was to procure teachers who knew their duties, and were willing and competent to perform them. This was no easy task, however, for the office had sunk into such contempt that no capable person was willing to undertake it. This difficulty he was ingenious enough to obviate. "Well, then," said he, "let us have no schoolmasters, since that would not become people in your situation in life; but allow me to select the most promising of our young men, and make them superintendents or regents of the schools." To this proposition they readily assented.

He next arranged a spelling and reading book for the schools, which was printed at the expense of a benevolent gentleman at Strasburg, who also contributed toward raising the salaries of the teachers.

The next want to be supplied was that of a school-house. Stouber applied to the mayor of Strasburg for permission to procure timber from the adjacent forests; which, after some hesitation, was granted him, and a log school-house was erected under his superintendence. He had now to contend with the ignorance and prejudice of his people, who feared that more

liberal qualifications on the part of the teachers would prove an increase of expense to them. They opposed also the introduction of the spelling-book which Stouber had prepared, from the fear that it contained heresy, or divination. These objections soon yielded to the rapid advancement which the children made; and many who had violently opposed the new system, ashamed to be left behind, came forward and begged to be instructed also. A system of regular tuition for adults on Sunday, and on the long winter evenings, was established in addition to the schools.

Another great object of this good minister's solicitude was, to distribute the word of God, of which the people of his parish knew but little. Having procured fifty copies of the Bible at Basle, he (to make them go further) divided each Bible into three parts, which he had bound in strong parchment. These volumes he placed in the schools, with permission to the scholars to carry them home with them. As soon as the people could be persuaded that these thin volumes were the word of God, (for they had been used to consider the Bible as a very *big book*,) they received them gladly. Even the Catholics, notwithstanding the prohibition of their priests, secretly read them with delight; and most cheering results followed this distribution of the sacred Scriptures.

A blessing also attended Stouber's discourses in the pulpit, for they were admirably adapted to the capacity and situation of his hearers.

He endeavoured in the simplest language to lead their minds to a knowledge of the happiness enjoyed by the people of God, and the means of attaining that happiness; and to convince them that, notwithstanding the poverty of their external circumstances, the Almighty would protect and bless them if they earnestly sought to do his will. He then brought them to consider the all-important doctrines of the cross, that we can only be regenerated by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and that we must rely solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and redemption. In 1756, when he had resided about six years at Waldbach, he was appointed pastor to the market town of Barr, on the other side of the Vosges. His parishioners, who, though still wild and uncultivated, had begun to feel the value of his instructions, expressed the greatest regret at his removal, as his intended successor was little more enlightened than his predecessors had been.

Four years afterward the living again became vacant; and M. Stouber, notwithstanding the reproaches and contempt cast upon him by many of his friends, who could not understand the principle of the love of Christ which constrained him to exchange a very profitable and respectable living in a town for a physical and moral wilderness, felt impelled to return to his beloved Steinthal. The pleasure with which this intelligence was circulated through the valley was extreme; the inhabitants of the different villages, both old and young, went to the

top of the mountain which had separated him from them, to witness his arrival and to bid him welcome with tears of grateful joy.

It was during the latter part of his residence in the Ban de la Roche, that M. Stouber's ministerial labours were so peculiarly successful, and that, under the blessing of God, a general improvement appeared to take place.

He had resided altogether more than fourteen years in this spot, actively engaged in promoting the welfare of his flock, when he had the affliction of losing a wife to whom he was tenderly attached, and who, animated by the same spirit as her husband, had warmly participated in all his labours of love. Three years after this melancholy event Stouber was called to the occupation of another field of usefulness, and his flock at the Ban de la Roche was left without a pastor.

Oberlin perceived the emergency of the case; to his benevolent mind the charge of such a people was rendered more interesting by the misery and moral degradation which had to be remedied; and, leaving a place where the brilliancy of his mental powers might have commanded universal homage, at the call of Providence, he chose to succeed M. Stouber in this desolate and retired spot.

CHAPTER II.

Oberlin's birth and childhood—Instances of his early benevolence—His act of self-dedication—Influence over others—Arrival at the Ban de la Roche.

John Frederic Oberlin was born at Strasburg, on the thirty-first of August, 1740. His father was a man of considerable attainments and much respectability in that place, and devoted his hours of leisure to the instruction of his nine children, all of whom he tenderly loved. They in return were devotedly attached to him; it was their pleasure to anticipate his wishes, and promote his happiness by every means in their power. Though his income was very limited, he was in the habit of dividing among his children a small sum of money every Saturday, to spend as pocket-money; and the following pleasing anecdote in allusion to this circumstance is related, as an early trait of the little Frederic's character:—His father was in the habit of paying off his tradesmen's accounts, with great exactness and punctuality, every Saturday evening. On these occasions little Frederic used to watch the countenance of his father, and if it wore a melancholy expression, imagining that he was at a loss to meet the demands made upon his purse, he would run to his savings-box, and return joyfully to empty his little store into the hands of his beloved parent.

But this was only one among the thousand instances of generosity and benevolence for which he was, even from his earliest infancy, so peculiarly distinguished. Self-denial ever seemed his ruling principle; and he was never so happy as when an opportunity of relieving the oppressed or distressed presented itself to his notice. I shall mention some more anecdotes of a similar description, because it is interesting to trace the germ of those dispositions which, when ripened into maturity, brought forth such remarkable fruits.

As he was one day crossing the market-place, when his little box of savings was nearly full, he saw some rude boys knock down a basket of eggs which a countrywoman was carrying upon her head. The woman was in great trouble, when Frederic not only rebuked the boys with much spirit, but ran home, fetched his box, and presented her with all its contents. Another day, he was passing in Strasburg market by the stall of an old clothes' vender. A poor infirm woman was endeavouring, without success, to procure an abatement in the price of some article she appeared to be particularly desirous of purchasing. She wanted two pence to complete the sum demanded, and was on the point of leaving the stall from her inability to give them. Frederic, pretending to be engaged with something else, only waited for her retiring, when he slipped the two pence into the dealer's hand, and whispered to him to call back the poor woman and

let her have the gown; and then, without stopping for her thanks, instantly ran away.

He, another time, saw a beadle ill-using an invalid beggar in the street; and following the impulse of the moment, totally regardless of consequences, he placed himself in a spirited manner between what he thought the oppressor and the oppressed, reproving the former in strong terms for his inhumanity. The beadle, indignant at such an interruption, wished to arrest the little fellow; but the neighbours, who knew and loved the boy, came running out of their shops to his assistance, and compelled the man to desist. A few days afterward he happened to be walking in a narrow lane, when he saw the same person at a distance. "Shall I run away?" thought he to himself. "No: God is with me. I relieved the poor man, and why should I fear?" With these reflections he proceeded on his way; and the beadle, smiling at him, allowed him to pass unmolested.

The horror of injustice felt by this little boy he owed to the kind care and pious instruction of his parents. His mother was an admirable woman; and to her judicious training and virtuous example he often said he owed his love for the things that are excellent, and his desire to render himself useful. She endeavoured to bring her children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and would assemble them every evening, and while they copied the pictures their father had prepared for them, she read aloud some instructive book, for their

benefit. When the hour of separation came, the children generally begged for one beautiful hymn from dear mamma; prayer followed, and thus their infant steps were guided to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

By way of relaxation, Oberlin's father used to take the children every Thursday evening during the summer months to his family estate in the country, where, having tied a drum about his waist, he would place his six blooming boys in a line, and, preceding them in the capacity of a drummer, he would make them go through all the military evolutions. To these pastimes, perhaps, little Frederic owed his extreme partiality for military exercises. While quite a lad, his knowledge of sieges and battles attracted the notice of the officers, and he was permitted to mingle with the soldiers, and join in their exercises. His father, however, having destined him for a learned profession, at length interfered, telling the young soldier that it was time to renounce this child's play for study and serious labour; and Frederic, though of an ardent and lively temperament, readily coinciding with his father's views, entered upon his studies with enthusiasm, and soon recovered the time which he had lost.

From his very infancy Oberlin seems to have been the subject of divine influence. In one of his papers he says, "During my infancy and my youth God often vouchsafed to touch my heart, and to draw me to himself. He bore with me, in my repeated backslidings, with a

kindness and indulgence hardly to be expressed." Even at a very early age his frequent prayer was, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. O God, teach me to do thy will."

While Oberlin was a student of theology in the university at Strasburg, Dr. Lountz began to attract great attention by his preaching: Oberlin's mother went to hear him, and was so delighted by his powerful manner of proclaiming a crucified Saviour, and remission of sins through his atonement, that she entreated her favourite son to accompany her. Though warned by his superiors not to go, he complied with his mother's wishes, and heard with such delight the truths of the gospel from the lips of Dr. Lountz, that he became a regular attendant on his preaching, and was, without doubt, strengthened in the resolution he had made to devote himself wholly to God.

At the age of twenty he solemnly renewed his baptismal consecration to God, in a written covenant which differs but slightly from the one written by Dr. Doddridge, and recommended by him in his "Rise and Progress."*

* "I would now urge you to make a solemn surrender of yourself to the service of God. Do not only form such a purpose in your heart, but expressly declare it in the divine presence. . . . . Do it in express words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing. Set your hand and seal to it, 'that on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration

After having completed his studies, Oberlin was ordained, but he remained for some years without undertaking any pastoral engagement, either because he did not feel himself as yet sufficiently mature for so responsible a charge, or because no situation offered itself, adapted to the view which he had formed of his own character and suitableness. Like the admirable Fletcher,* a man of kindred spirit, who refused to undertake the care of a parish because the emoluments were too large, and the duty was too small, Oberlin wished only for a station where he might find ample scope to be useful: for, having devoted himself to his Master's service, he sought neither worldly distinctions, nor worldly honours, but determined to be actuated only by the specific and prevailing desire of pleasing him, and of living to his glory. During this interval, which lasted from the

and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, that *whatever others might do, you would serve the Lord.*'

"Make the day of the transaction, if you conveniently can, a day of secret fasting and prayer; and when your heart is prepared with a becoming awe of the divine Majesty, with an humble confidence in his goodness, and an earnest desire of his favour, then present yourself on your knees before God, and read it over deliberately and solemnly; and when you have signed it, lay it by in some secure place, where you may review it whenever you please; and make it a rule with yourself to review it, if possible, at certain seasons of the year, that you may keep up the remembrance of it."—*Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, chap. xvii, page 343.

* The Rev. J. W. Fletcher, rector of Madeley, Shropshire.

year 1760 to 1767, he employed himself in private teaching, and became domestic tutor to the family of the then distinguished surgeon, M. Ziegenhagen, of Strasburg. While in this situation he acquired that surgical knowledge and acquaintance with medicine, which, in his subsequent life, proved so peculiarly useful, and enabled him to render such eminent services to his parishioners.

In the year 1766, the appointment of a chaplaincy in a French regiment was offered to Oberlin, and, as the situation promised to open a sphere of extensive usefulness, he agreed to accept it, and soon afterward left M. Ziegenhagen's employ, and commenced a preparatory course of reading. While thus engaged, the curacy of the Ban de la Roche became vacant, in consequence of M. Stouber's removing to Strasburg. Stouber, knowing Oberlin's piety and zeal, determined if possible to secure him for the vacant post, and with this view repaired to his lodging.

It was a little attic, up three pair of stairs. On opening the door, the first object that caught his attention was a small bed, standing in one corner of the room, covered with brown paper hangings. "That would just suit the Steinthal," said he to himself. On approaching the bed, he found Oberlin lying upon it, and suffering from a violent tooth-ache. He rallied him about the simplicity of his curtains, and the homeliness of his apartment. "And pray," continued he, after having taken a survey round

the room, "what is the use of that little iron pan that hangs over your table?" "That is my kitchen," replied Oberlin; "I am in the habit of dining at home with my parents every day, and they give me a large piece of bread to bring back in my pocket. At eight o'clock in the evening, I put my bread into that pan, and having sprinkled it with salt, and poured a little water upon it, I place it over my lamp, and go on with my studies till ten or eleven o'clock, when I generally begin to feel hungry, and relish my self-cooked supper more than the greatest dainties."

Stouber congratulated him on the happiness of possessing such a contented disposition; and assuring him that he was just the person he wished to find, communicated to him the object of his visit.

Oberlin was rejoiced at the proposition, and as soon as he could obtain an honourable release from the acceptance of the chaplaincy, and had ascertained that there were no prior claimants to the situation, he accepted it. The Ban de la Roche, as a sphere of pastoral labour, was wholly uninviting to any but those who, in singleness of heart, were wishing to forsake all for Christ: Oberlin, therefore, after many earnest prayers that a blessing might rest upon himself and upon the little flock committed to his charge, accompanied his new friend and patron thither, and arrived at Waldbach on the 30th of March, 1767. He was at this time in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

CHAPTER III.

Oberlin's first impressions on reaching Waldbach—State of the parish—Improvements needed—Opposition manifested by the peasantry—Correspondence with M. Stouber—Letters from the latter—His marriage—Improvements in the condition of the roads—Agricultural improvements, &c.

On Oberlin's arrival at Waldbach, he took up his residence at the parsonage house, a tolerably commodious building, formerly occupied by M. Stouber. It had a court-yard in front, and a good garden behind, and stood in a delightful situation, very near the church, being surrounded by steep dells clothed with wood, and rugged mountains, the tops and sides of which were partially covered with pines, and a few other straggling trees.

The first glance which he threw over the mountains destined to be the scene of his ministerial labours, convinced him, that notwithstanding the partial reformation effected by M. Stouber's exertions, neither the necessities of his flock, nor the difficulties which opposed their removal, were of any ordinary kind.

They were alike destitute of the means of mental and social intercourse; they spoke a rude dialect, which was the medium of no external information; they were entirely secluded from the neighbouring districts by the

want of roads, which, owing to the devastation of war, and decays of population, had been so totally lost, that the only mode of communication, from the bulk of the parish to the neighbouring towns, was across the river Bruche, a stream thirty feet wide, by stepping-stones, and in winter along its bed; the husbandmen were destitute of the most necessary agricultural implements, and had no means of procuring them; the provisions springing from the soil were not sufficient to maintain even a scanty population; and a feudal service, more fatal than sterile land and ungenial climate, constantly depressed and irritated their spirits.

Confident, however, that strength would be afforded, if rightly sought, Oberlin at once resolved to employ all the attainments in science, philosophy, and religion, which he had brought with him from Strasburg, to the improvement of the parish and the benefit of his parishioners.

Those individuals over whom M. Stouber had gained an influence, silently acquiesced in the projects of his successor; but a very determined spirit of opposition soon manifested itself among the opposite party, under the supposition that old practices are always safe, and that whatever is new must be pernicious. They resolved, therefore, not to submit to innovation, but to try what they might be able to effect by determined resistance. On one occasion, soon after his arrival, they laid a plan to waylay their new minister, and inflict upon

him a severe personal castigation, judging that such a measure, at the commencement of his career, would prevent his future interference.

Oberlin happily received information of their intention, and, without being disconcerted at the intelligence, immediately determined upon a mode of correction, in which the peculiar gentleness and decision, that formed such leading traits in his character, were remarkably displayed.

Sunday being fixed upon for the execution of this attempt, when the day arrived, he took for his text those words of our Saviour, in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew :—" But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right check, turn to him the other also ;" and proceeded from these words to speak of the Christian patience with which we should suffer injuries, and submit to false surmises, and ill usage. After the service, the malecontents met at the house of one of the party, to amuse themselves in conjecturing what their pastor would do, when he should find himself compelled to put in practice the principles he had so readily explained. What, then, must have been their astonishment, when the door opened, and Oberlin himself stood before them!

" Here am I, my friends," said he, with that calm dignity of manner which inspires even the most violent with respect; " I am acquainted with your design. You have wished to chastise me, because you consider me culpable.

If I have indeed violated the rules which I have laid down for you, punish me for it. It is better that I should deliver myself into your hands, than that you should be guilty of the meanness of an ambuscade." These simple words produced their intended effect. The peasants, ashamed of their scheme, sincerely begged his forgiveness, and promised never again to entertain a doubt of the sincerity of the motives by which he was actuated, and of his affectionate desires to promote their welfare.

A few weeks after this event another circumstance, of a similar nature, occurred in one of the adjoining villages. He was informed that the young people belonging to it had determined to seize him the following Sunday, on his leaving their place of worship, and to duck him in a cistern. He consequently took occasion to speak, in his sermon, of the happiness and security enjoyed by those who trust in the Lord; of the special protection which he vouchsafes to his servants; and of his firm belief that not a hair of our heads can be injured without his express permission. He was in the general habit of returning home on horseback, but this time he set out purposely on foot, desiring a peasant to lead his horse. He had not proceeded far, before he saw two or three men partly concealed behind the hedge, and awaiting his approach. He passed them, however, with so calm and composed a countenance and step, that they were daunted, and did not venture to put their plan into execution.

These occurrences are believed to have had a good effect in accelerating the execution of his projects of reform; for those who had connived in the plots against him, anxious to reinstate themselves in his good esteem, and conscious that they had no better means of succeeding than by warmly seconding the views which they had hitherto opposed, were henceforward among the foremost to assist him.

During the first years of his residence in the Ban de la Roche, Oberlin found an enlightened and experienced guide, and a wise and faithful counsellor, in his predecessor, M. Stouber. The following letter, addressed by the latter to his young friend, is full of excellent counsel and advice; and proves that he had himself felt the responsibility attached to so peculiar a situation.

"*Strasburg, June* 2, 1768.

* * * * *

* * * * *

"Do not, my dear friend, suppose that I could have done any thing better than you have done it. God alone can enable either of us to do just so much as he pleases, and no more. The little experience that it cost me long years of labour and difficulty to obtain, you will acquire more speedily. You possess it already, in some degree, though still insufficiently. When I was in your situation, a single circumstance, or even a single word, would sometimes discourage and discompose me so much that I did not

know what to do. I could not help perceiving almost every day that I had ignorantly committed the greatest mistakes—ignorantly escaped the greatest dangers—ignorantly lost or acquired the greatest advantages:—that what I sought was evil, and what I shunned good;—that what I hoped for was nothing, and what I supposed nothing, something. If it was God's purpose that any scheme of mine should succeed, he caused the heads of the parish to listen to me even when I least expected it, and had made the least preparation for it; and as frequently permitted the plans upon which I had grounded my hopes of success, and taken the most pains to carry into effect, to become of no avail.

"In so deplorable a state are the people of the unfortunate Steinthal, that one in your situation can do nothing but commend them to God, and look for succour and assistance from him alone. If he should see meet to let things go on for a period in their present state, and without any visible improvement, do not be discouraged. He undoubtedly will, in his own good time, effect such changes among some of the members of your flock, as neither the folly nor the taunts of the remainder, nor the craft and malice of the enemy, shall be able to subvert; and while you trace his finger throughout the whole, and thank him for having crowned your exertions with even this partial success, you will find increased cause for the exercise of self-distrust, patience, and humility. God will,

I feel assured, bless your endeavours, if you continue to maintain that devotedness of spirit which your letter so sweetly and fervently breathes. Only trust every thing to him; and pray for the blessing which he alone can bestow. You have more influence over others than I have; and this, provided you fear no one but God, and guard against forming too many schemes, will render you in truth more useful than I have been. But I must remind you, that even when deeply engaged in good works, it is possible to depart from spiritual Christianity; and I would, on this account, urge you to maintain a constant guard over yourself. You have been brought under the influence of religion, and, in the usual sense of the term, converted to God; but, without constant prayer to him, and the most zealous watchfulness, there is a danger lest you should rest satisfied with this, and relapse into indifference. By being so incessantly occupied in the prosecution of your favourite schemes, and destitute of stimulating society, you may become cold and lukewarm in your religious duties, and less devoted in your service to God, even though busily employed in promoting the well-being of your fellow-creatures. I would, therefore, earnestly exhort you, my dear friend, to be always 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;' living only to, and for, him. Thus you will be enabled to overcome difficulties; you will find comfort and peace in believing, and he will protect, guide, and bless you. Your work will

prosper, not perhaps in the manner which you design, but in the way which God has purposed.

"I have no other end in view in this exhortation than your good. I wish you to understand that this is, literally, my only object in writing thus plainly. I speak frankly and sincerely to you, because I know that our hearts are closely allied, and because I have sometimes observed with deep concern the dangers incident to young persons; coldness and lukewarmness after the first fervour of religious feeling has subsided; self-sufficiency in what they have effected, and too great tendency to absorption of mind in even laudable and benevolent pursuits.

"This is the motive that induces me, once for all, to warn you on this point; for the heart of man is deceitful, and naturally tends to earth if it is not constantly drawn upward.

"There are yet two things to which I particularly wish to direct your attention;—prayer and the Holy Scriptures. I find it necessary, in order to keep up habitual communion with God, and to fan the spirit of Christianity in my own bosom, to have constant recourse to them.

"It is by reading the writings of the apostles, almost exclusively, that I am enabled to press onward in my spiritual course, and to encourage myself to prayer.

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"Yours, my dear friend,

"In the bonds of Christian love,

"G. STOUBER."

Warned and encouraged by such powerful exhortations, Oberlin went on his way rejoicing, and eventually became established in Christian faith and holiness.

But I have now to speak of an event which materially contributed to enhance his temporal happiness. This was his marriage with a very pious and amiable young lady of Strasburg, named Madeleine Salomé Witter. This young lady was a friend and relation of the family. She had lost her father, who was a professor in the University of Strasburg, at a very early age, and her mother died shortly afterward; but, although deprived of the benefit of parental instruction, she possessed a sound understanding, and a highly cultivated mind, deeply imbued with religious principle. In forming this connection Oberlin believed himself to be following the dictates of Providence, and he entered into it in a spirit of deep piety. The marriage took place July the sixth, 1768, about a year after his settlement at Waldbach.

Mrs. Oberlin soon became an invaluable assistant to her husband in all his labours of love, tempering his zeal with her prudence, and forwarding his benevolent plans by her judicious arrangements. In the prosecution of those plans much Christian firmness was requisite, for they had, as we have already seen, to encounter the prejudices generally attendant on ignorance, and such as the most unwearied patience and self-denying virtue could alone have surmounted.

Almost the first object of Oberlin's provident activity was to repair and widen the roads. In a country where rocks hanging on the steep declivity of a chain of mountains, and rapid torrents pouring from their summits, are perpetually causing considerable falls of loosened earth, the formation and preservation of roads involve an expense far beyond the resources of a poor and isolated parish; and all the roads belonging to the Ban de la Roche were consequently, during the greater part of the year, absolutely impassable.

To rescue his parishioners from the half-savage state in which he found them, he judged it necessary, as a preliminary measure, to bring them into contact with the inhabitants of other districts, further advanced in civilization; and for this purpose to open a regular communication with the high road to Strasburg, by which means the productions of the Ban de la Roche might find a market, and materials be procured for exercising their industry and ingenuity.

Having therefore assembled the people, he proposed that they should blast the rocks, and convey a sufficient quantity of enormous masses to construct a wall to support a road about a mile and a half in length, along the banks of the river Biuche, and build a bridge across it near Rothau.

The peasants were perfectly astonished at the proposition. The project appeared to them totally impracticable, and every one excused himself, on the plea of private business, from

engaging in so stupendous an undertaking. Oberlin, still intent on the prosecution of his scheme, endeavoured to refute the objections raised on all sides: "The produce of your fields," said he, "will then meet with a ready market abroad; for, instead of being imprisoned in your villages nine months out of the twelve, you will be enabled to keep up an intercourse with the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts. You will have the opportunity of procuring a number of things of which you have long stood in need, without the possibility of obtaining them, and your happiness will be augmented and increased by the additional means thus afforded of providing comforts for yourselves and your children." But his arguments were concluded with a more touching appeal. He offered them his own example in the undertaking. "Let all," he said, "who feel the importance of my proposition, come and work with me."

Oberlin had already traced the plan, and no sooner had he pronounced these words, than, with a pick-axe on his shoulder, he proceeded to the spot; while the astonished peasants, animated by his example, forgot their former excuses, and hastened, with unanimous consent, to fetch their tools and follow him. He presently assigned to each individual an allotted post; selected for himself and a faithful servant the most difficult and dangerous places; and, regardless of the thorns by which his hands were torn, and of the loose stones by

which they were occasionally bruised, went to work with the greatest diligence and enthusiasm. The emulation awakened by his conduct quickly spread through the whole parish. The increased number of hands rendered an increased number of implements necessary; he procured them from Strasburg; expenses accumulated; he interested his distant friends, and, through their assistance, funds were obtained; walls were erected to support the earth which appeared ready to give way; mountain torrents, which had hitherto inundated the meadows, were diverted into courses, or received into beds sufficient to contain them; perseverance, in short, triumphed over difficulties, and at the commencement of the year 1770 a communication was opened with Strasburg, by means of the new road, and a neat wooden bridge thrown across the river. This bridge still bears the name of "*Le Pont de Charité.*"*

The immediate advantages resulting from this great undertaking increased the influence which Oberlin was already beginning to acquire over his parishioners, and rendered the adoption of his successive plans, particularly that of a regular communication between five hitherto separated villages, still more practicable. It seemed as though nothing could daunt their ardour; and the pastor, who, on the sabbath, had directed their attention with that earnestness and warmth with which his own soul was animated, to "the rest that remaineth for the

* The Bridge of Charity.

people of God," and to the "city which hath foundations," was seen on the Monday, with a pick-axe on his shoulder, marching at the head of two hundred of his flock, with an energy that neither fatigue nor danger could diminish.

One of the next wants that he found it necessary to supply was a depot in the valley, for agricultural tools and implements of husbandry; for whenever any of them happened to break, or to get out of repair, two whole days' work must be lost in going to Strasburg to procure more, and even then the poor peasants were destitute of ready money to purchase them. To remedy this inconvenience, he stocked a large warehouse in Waldbach with the necessary articles, and gave the purchasers credit till their payments came round. He also established a sort of lending fund, under such strict regulations, that those who did not punctually repay the money they had borrowed on the prescribed day were deprived, for a certain time, of the liberty of borrowing again.

Another measure, which he considered essential to the progress of civilization, was the introduction of trades. There were neither masons, blacksmiths, nor cartwrights in the country, and the inhabitants were subjected to numerous privations, and to great expenses, in fetching from the neighbouring towns what was needful for the supply of their wants. Oberlin, therefore, selected from among the elder boys some of the readiest abilities, and sent them to Strasburg, to learn the trades of a carpenter, a

mason, a glazier, a cartwright, and a blacksmith. By this means he succeeded in procuring good workmen, who, on their return, not only instructed others in their newly acquired arts, but saved the people of the Ban de la Roche the expense and loss of time they had formerly incurred: nor was this the only advantage accruing from so judicious a step, for the money which had hitherto been sent to a distance was now circulated among themselves. So scarce had money previously been, that the gift of a single *sou** is said to have overwhelmed a poor woman with joy, as it enabled her to procure a little salt to eat with her potatoes.

Finally, Oberlin's solicitude extended to their dwellings. They were generally wretched cabins, hewn out of the rocks, or sunk into the sides of the mountains, and without cellars sufficiently deep to preserve the potatoes, which formed their principal sustenance, from the frost. Under his superintendence and direction, however, cellars were constructed, and comfortable cottages erected.

In the prosecution of these plans, as well as those introduced at a later period, Oberlin was much indebted to the counsel and experience of his paternal friend, M. Stouber, with whom he maintained a regular correspondence. The following extract from one of his letters deserves insertion in this memoir, because the advice it contains may prove of utility to others,

* A small coin, of less value than one cent.

as well as to the individual for whom it was originally designed:—

"My Dear Friend,— * * * *

"The best advice I can give you is, to care chiefly for the *souls* of your flock. I would not have you too anxious to render them eager in the pursuit of worldly good; for, as they become Christians, they will naturally become active, industrious, and provident. You must not allow them to be either idlers, or the slaves of mammon.

"By endeavouring too much to induce them to adopt your plans in preference to others, and on account of some supposed superiority over those to which they have been accustomed, you will defeat your own purposes, and excite their suspicion and disgust. I advise you, therefore, to leave them, for the present at least, pretty much to their own devices, and to labour, in charity and love, for the salvation of their souls, firmly believing that by so doing you will obtain the greatest blessing. This is the last thing that experience taught me during my residence in the Steinthal, or rather since I left it. I much regret having occasionally induced the people to do things against their will. If I were now there, I would leave them much more to themselves; and, however indifferent might be the appearance of their external affairs, the state of their finances, or the conduct of their schools, I would say little to them on the subject of economy or manage-

ment, but, by evincing a sincere interest in their concerns, I would endeavour to gain their confidence, and induce them to regard me as their friend; and then, having once obtained this confidence, and a proportionate degree of influence, I would exert it, to the utmost of my ability, to their advantage, both in the instruction of the young, and the conversion of the old, seeking to win their affections by my earnest desire to promote their spiritual interests. If you adopt this method, my dear friend, God will take care of the rest. Necessity will compel your people to employ themselves, and they will think a thousand times better of their own schemes, than of any that you can propose to them.

"I am far from wishing you to give up your projects, (many of which have been already attended with such admirable success,) but I acknowledge that I have, for my own part, felt the danger of bestowing too much attention upon such things, rather than upon more essential and important duties. At the same time I would not have you by any means neglect a ready acquiescence in such practical schemes as may suggest themselves to the minds of your people, or the adoption of such as may occur to yourself: only do not make them your primary object."

Oberlin felt the importance of this last advice in his efforts for the improvement of agriculture, on which subject his parishioners

reluctantly received his instructions, as they supposed, from his having spent his youth in a city, that he must be incompetent to give it; he determined therefore to appeal to their eyes rather than their ears, believing that they would be more easily led to coincide in his views when they had seen his theories reduced to practice. Belonging to his parsonage were two gardens, crossed by very public footpaths, and these he chose for the scene of his labours. Assisted by a favourite and intelligent servant, he dug trenches four or five feet deep, and surrounded the young trees that he planted in them with such soil as he considered best adapted to promote their growth. He also procured slips of apples, pears, plumbs, cherries, and walnuts, and made a large nursery ground of one of the gardens, hitherto noted for the poverty of its soil; and then waited with patience for the time when his parishioners, observing the success of his experiments, should come of their own accord to express their astonishment, and to ask his assistance in raising trees for themselves.

His expectations were not disappointed: the trees grew and flourished; and, as the peasants had to pass through the gardens in going to their daily work, they could not help stopping to observe the surprising contrast between the scanty supply of their own, and the rich produce of their pastor's land, and at length repaired to him, anxiously inquiring how such very fine trees could grow in such a soil

Oberlin, according to his accustomed method of deriving instruction from every incident, first directed their thoughts to Him who "causeth the earth to bring forth her bud," and who "crowneth the year with his goodness," and then proceeded to explain the mode of cultivation by which, under his all-superintending providence, their exertions might be followed by similar success.

The taste for planting trees was thus diffused, and the art of grafting, in which he himself instructed those who wished to understand it, became a favourite employment. The very face of the country, in consequence, underwent a complete change; for the cottages, hitherto for the most part bare and desolate, were surrounded by neat little orchards and gardens; and, in the place of indigence and misery, the villages and their inhabitants gradually assumed an air of rural happiness.

So barbarous had been the state of the Ban de la Roche, that previous to the year 1709 its inhabitants had subsisted on wild apples and pears: the famine of that year had however compelled them to devise other means of subsistence, and, clearing away a large forest, they planted it with a species of potato. When Oberlin came, their crops, owing to the washing away of the soil, had so degenerated, that fields which had formerly produced from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty bushels, now only produced from thirty to fifty.

Oberlin imported new seed, showed them the

cause of the decrease, and pointed out the remedy, which, being applied, soon restored the crops to a degree of excellence and profusion which not only rendered them sufficient for home consumption, but made them a profitable article of exportation.

Having attained a thorough knowledge of botany while at M. Ziegenhagen's, he made his people acquainted with their native plants, many of which he taught them to apply to useful purposes: he also succeeded in introducing flax and clover, the seeds of which he had imported. The success which attended his labours was much owing to the attention he paid in the management of manures, which he taught his people to ferment and to compose from mosses, leaves, and the cones of the fir-tree; and that nothing might be lost, he directed the children to tear up old woollen rags, and old shoes, which, to encourage their labours, he purchased of them, and applied as manure. By every means did this good man thus endeavour to raise his people from the abject state into which their ignorance and poverty had placed them, leading them step by step, not only by precept, but example also.

In 1778 he formed an agricultural society, composed of the most intelligent of his parishioners, with which he invited the pastors of adjoining parishes to co-operate, and that it might have the benefit of valuable periodicals, he united it to the agricultural society at Strasburg; and the latter society, wishing to encour-

age its interesting auxiliary, entrusted to its disposal a sum of money to be distributed as prizes among the peasants who should most distinguish themselves in the planting of nursery grounds, and in the grafting of fruit-trees.

The good effects resulting from this measure induced Oberlin likewise to form a fund, supported by voluntary contributions, for the distribution of prizes to the farmers of each commune, who should rear the finest ox. A short time afterward, with a view to prepare the rising generation for continuing the works which their fathers had begun, and to give them the opportunity of acquiring useful information, he commenced the plan of devoting two hours every other Thursday morning to a familiar lecture on the subjects of agriculture and of useful science.

Such indeed was his assiduity, that not a year rolled away in which some astonishing improvement was not effected in the condition or the morals of his people; and the surrounding districts beheld with admiration the rapid progress that civilization was continually making in the once neglected and apparently forsaken Steinthal.

CHAPTER IV.

Oberlin's address to his parishioners on the commencement of a new year—Erection of a new school-house in the Ban de la Roche—Progress of civilization—Four other school-houses erected—Introduction of infant schools, under the care of governesses—Public schools—Weekly assembling of the children at Waldbach, to receive religious instruction—Establishment of a circulating library—Almanack—Christian Society established in 1782—Abrogation of that society.

While Oberlin was thus zealous in encouraging the progress of agriculture, and in forming his people to habits of industry, he attended with equal solicitude to what related more immediately to his pastoral functions, as the following address to his parishioners, on the commencement of the new year, 1779, bears ample testimony.

"January 1, 1779.

"*And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.*"—Rev. xxi, 5.

"Through the grace of God we have entered upon a new year. O! that it may be new with respect to our sins, our sufferings, and the temptations with which we may have to combat.

"As to sins, may their number diminish day by day, and may we be more constantly animated and governed by the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. As to sufferings and tribulations, may they produce the effect which God designs

in sending them, namely, that of detaching our affections from this transitory world, and of rendering us attentive to his will and word. May they quicken us to prayer; and induce us to strive more earnestly to enter in at the strait gate, and to 'press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling.' And as to the temptations which may be placed in our way, may we live entirely to Jesus Christ, and maintain constant communion with him, in order that we may receive, from time to time, fresh supplies of grace and strength to resist them, and be enabled to bring forth fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God and to the honour of his holy gospel. O Lord, be thou pleased, with the renewal of the year, to renew our strength. O Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast said, 'I make all things new;' O make our faith new also.

"May this year be marked by a more lively, more deep, and more serious repentance; by greater fervour in supplicating the influences of God's Holy Spirit; by renewed earnestness in devoting ourselves to him, and to his service. May we look to him, and employ all our mental and bodily powers, our time, and our property, to his glory, and to the purpose for which Jesus quitted his throne, namely, the conversion and happiness of mankind. O may we, this year, apply ourselves, with renewed faithfulness, to obey all his commandments, and all his precepts.

"May this year be distinguished by an increase of the number of the children of God,

and of the followers of Jesus Christ; by the weakening of the kingdom of Satan within us, and by the coming of the kingdom of God.

"May we, not only during the present, but, also, during each succeeding year which God shall grant us in this probationary world, become more and more prepared for a blessed eternity—abound more in prayers of intercession and supplication—shed more tears of penitence, contrition, love, and pity—and perform more good works, in order that we may reap an abundant harvest on that day, when God, through Jesus Christ, shall 'make all things new.'"

The instruction of the young engaged Oberlin's especial attention; and as the only regular school-house in the five villages was Stouber's hut, now falling to decay, (owing to its having been built of unseasoned materials,) he resolved on erecting a more eligible edifice. To this, however, his parishioners were violently opposed, and refused their consent until he had formally stipulated that the parish should be entirely freed from any expenses which might occur from either the erection or reparation of the projected building.

Oberlin applied for aid to his friends at Strasburg; and though the sums they sent were inadequate to the demand, and his own income very limited, yet he resolved to proceed with the building, confiding in the goodness of his heavenly Father, and convinced, as he often said, that if he asked for any thing with faith,

and it was really right that the thing should take place, it would infallibly be granted to his prayers. "When, indeed, are our plans more likely to succeed, than when we enter upon them in humble and simple dependance upon God, whose blessing alone can render them successful?"

The event afforded a fresh evidence of this truth. Not only did Oberlin complete this school-house, without materially injuring his own slender finances, but, in the course of a few years, school-houses were erected in each of the other villages by the voluntary contributions of the people, who warmly seconded their pastor's views; such had been the progress of civilization among them.

During the construction of these buildings, the preparation of teachers went on, who were now selected from the most respectable and intelligent families. Oberlin, observing that while the education of the elder children went on, the younger ones, whose parents were necessarily engaged in work, must be sadly neglected, devised a plan for their improvement, by the introduction of infant schools, probably the very first ever established, and the model of those subsequently opened at Paris, and still more recently in this country. Observation and experience had convinced him that, even from the very cradle, children are capable of being taught to distinguish between right and wrong, and of being trained to habits of subordination and industry; and, in conjunction with

his wife, he therefore formed governesses for each commune, engaged large rooms for them, and salaried them at his own expense. Instruction, in these schools, was mingled with amusement; and while enough of discipline was introduced to instil habits of subjection, a degree of liberty was allowed, which left the infant mind full power of expansion, and information was conveyed which might turn to the most important use in after life. During school hours, the children were collected on forms in great circles. Two women were employed, the one to direct the handicraft, the other to instruct and entertain them. While the children of two or three years only were made at intervals to sit quietly by, those of five or six were taught to knit, spin, and sew; and when they were beginning to be weary of their occupation, their governess showed them coloured pictures, relating to some subject of Scripture history, making them recite after her the explanations she gave. She also explained to them maps of the Ban de la Roche, France, and Europe, which Oberlin had engraved on wood for their use: and she taught them to sing moral songs and hymns, thus varying their employments, and giving them constant occupation. The children were never allowed to speak the incorrect dialect of their country, but were taught to express themselves in good French; and thus Oberlin succeeded in banishing the patois or imperfect language of the Ban de la Roche.

With minds thus trained by discipline, the children, when arrived at a proper age, entered the public schools, the masters of which were relieved and encouraged in their arduous labours by the progress they had already made.

Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, the principles of agriculture, astronomy, and sacred and profane history, were regularly taught in the higher schools; but, although Oberlin carefully superintended the whole proceedings, he reserved for himself, almost exclusively, the religious instruction of this large family. Every Sunday the children of each village, in rotation, assembled at the church, to sing the hymns they had learned, to recite the religious lessons which they had committed to memory during the week, and to receive the exhortations or admonitions of their common father.

Besides this sabbath service, Oberlin established a weekly meeting of all the scholars at Waldbach, in which he compared the merits of the schools, improved the method of teaching, and stimulated the scholars to increased diligence, for they knew the "dear father" (the title by which Oberlin was designated in his parish) attentively watched their progress, and they were truly anxious to secure his approving smiles, which were regarded by them as an ample reward for all the labours of the past week.

The success attending these benevolent exertions induced his friends at Strasburg to increase their subscriptions, and Oberlin was thus enabled to establish a library of valuable works

for the use of the children, and to have a number of school-books printed for the Ban de la Roche; he also made a collection of indigenous plants, and procured an electrical machine, and other philosophical and mathematical instruments. Prizes were likewise awarded to both masters and scholars; and various works upon natural history and other branches of science, some of which he printed at his own expense, put in circulation on the plan of a little book-society, being retained for three months at a time, first at one village and then at another, passing successively from house to house, in order that the younger members of the family might be supplied with a continual fund of useful and agreeable information.

Oberlin, about this time, drew up an almanack, divested of all the falsehoods and superstitions with which those in use were filled, thinking that their tendency was to mislead and deceive uneducated persons.

Oberlin knew how to blend amusement with instruction in the wisest and most judicious manner; and while his primary object ever was to ground the young people in the principles of our Christian faith, and to induce them to consider religion as the guardian and inspirer of their happiness, he had also the talent of diffusing among them that taste for pastoral and agricultural life which their circumstances rendered so peculiarly desirable.

In order to familiarize the children of twelve or fifteen years of age with these pursuits, they

were accustomed to write, under the direction of their teachers, short essays on agriculture and the management of fruit-trees, selected and extracted from the best authors. These they afterward committed to memory; and, at the annual examination, they were expected to give answers to the questions proposed.

The Ban de la Roche presented a delightful field for botany, and they were, even at a still earlier period, initiated in the principles of that pleasing science, and accustomed to range the woods in summer in search of the plants whose names and properties they had learned during the winter, and to transplant them into the little gardens their parents had been induced to give them for the exercise of their industry and skill.

They were also taught to draw the flowers; an art in which some of them succeeded remarkably well.*

* The editor has seen several groups of flowers copied from nature by Oberlin's scholars. She has in her possession a garland of roses and heart's-ease, upon which the children of our public schools would look with astonishment, were they told it was painted by a poor little boy in similar circumstances with themselves. The following text is neatly written, in French, in the centre :—"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," Isa. lxii, 3. And underneath are inscribed these words :—"Will you, Mr. Legrand, accept this slight token of sincere gratitude from your humble and dutiful scholar,

"GUSTAVUS SCHEIDECKER."

Thus were the little children of the Ban de la Roche accustomed to acknowledge their obligations to those who kindly took charge of their education.

From what has been related, it will be supposed that the schoolmasters were, at this period, persons of a somewhat different description from the shepherd schoolmasters in Stouber's time. Individuals of the first distinction in the village were generally fixed upon for the office, now become a very important one; and indeed at Bellefosse the character of mayor and schoolmaster were at one time united in the same person. They were still called "régents," according to M. Stouber's original suggestion, and were paid on a plan fixed by law: widows, masters of families, and each particular child sent to school, had a certain proportion to pay.

Among other things, the régents were required to impress upon the minds of their pupils that, from the peculiarity of their local circumstances, (their maintenance depending almost entirely on the products of the valley,) it was a duty incumbent upon them to contribute their share toward the general prosperity; and, previously to receiving religious confirmation, they were expected to bring a certificate from their parents, that they had planted, in a spot described, two young trees.* The day on which

* It is the injunction of the apostle, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x, 31. The views of religion which Oberlin entertained made him bring the greatest principles to the minutest operation. He would take a stone out of the road, if it were likely to incommode a traveller, on the principle of love to his neighbour; and in this manner he argued respecting all the duties in which mankind are engaged. Take, for instance, a direc ion to his people on

the first fruit was presented to their beloved pastor was an interesting and useful festival.

Thus were the clouds of ignorance, which had, for a long period, settled on the Ban de la Roche, gradually dispelled by the enlightening influence of Christian education; and this at a time when knowledge was considered unnecessary, and dangerous for the poorer classes; and when the modern systems of cheap and mechanical instruction were almost entirely unknown. The change that was, in the course of a few years, effected in this place, is the more extraordinary when we reflect upon the state of the people previous to Oberlin's arrival; and, in contemplating it, we are involuntarily led to unite with him, in ascribing the

planting trees. This, with other men, would be an affair of convenience; with him, in his circumstances, it was a religious duty. He thus addressed his parishioners:—

"*November* 13, 1803.

"Dear Friends,—Satan, the enemy of mankind, rejoices when we demolish and destroy. Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the contrary, rejoices when we labour for the public good.

"You all desire to be saved by Him, and hope to become partakers of his glory. Please him, then, by every possible means, during the remainder of the time you may have to live in this world.

"He is pleased when, from the principle of love, you plant trees for the public benefit. Now is the season. Be willing then to plant them. Plant them also in the best possible manner. Remember you do it to please him.

"Put all your roads into good condition; ornament them; employ some of your trees for this purpose, and attend to their growth."

praise to that great and glorious Being to whom alone it is due, and who had thus caused "the waters to break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." The total renunciation of any thing like merit of his own formed a remarkable and striking feature in Oberlin's character; he regarded himself merely as the instrument whom it had pleased God to employ, and was frequently heard to say, "I have little merit in the good that I have done; I have only that of obedience to the will of God. He has been graciously pleased to manifest his intentions to me, and has always given me the means of executing them."

In the year 1782, Oberlin, in the hope of advancing the spiritual interests of his people, established a society, which he denominated "The Christian Society." The following is a summary of the rules, translated from the original, in his own handwriting:—

Rubrics of the Christian Society, for assisting the memory of the members, and especially that of the superintendents, whose duty it is to see that they are duly observed.

1. Regeneration.
2. Sanctification.
3. "We are all one in Christ Jesus."
4. "Abide in me."
5. "Christ is all, and in all."
6. "Bring forth much fruit."
7. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

8. Nourish the inner man, by
   (1.) The word of God.
   (2.) Continual prayer.
   (3.) The frequent use of the holy sacrament.

9. The superintendents are the overseers, whom the members choose from among themselves.

10. Not only the superintendents, but also all the members, ought to watch over each other for good; to exhort, and to warn each other,

11. With sweetness, charity, humility, and patience.

12. As to the incorrigible—follow the example of Jesus Christ. Matt. xviii, 15, 16.

13. Meet for prayer on this subject.

14. Be submissive to your superiors. All the members are fellow-workers with their pastor.

15. Good management.

16. Good education.

17. "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands."

18. "Search the Scriptures" diligently.

19. Diligence. Diligence with application and energy—that is to say, industry.

20. "Be careful for nothing."

21. Lose no time.

22. Allow of no idleness or negligence on the part of those confided to your care.

23. Honest and exact payment: no artfulness or cunning. See Rom. xii, 17.

24. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

25. Endeavour to promote the happiness of all.

26. "Provoke unto love and to good works."

27. Appropriate part of your earnings, at stated intervals, to the public good.

This society seems, by the account which is given of it, to have been established for the purpose of prayer and religious conversation. It appears to have been violently opposed, and spoken against, by some persons in the parish, which induced Oberlin, in the supposition that the scandal of the bad prevailed over the advantage of the good, to put it down about a year and a half after its formation. At its dissolution he delivered an address on the subject to his parishioners.

In the course of the year 1784, Oberlin had the following paper printed in French and German, and placed in a conspicuous station in every cottage throughout this extensive parish. It serves to prove at how early a period the subject of missions occupied his mind, and led him to form those monthly prayer meetings to promote this object, which are now carried forward by most of the denominations of Christians throughout the world:—

"Our Lord Jesus Christ desires his followers to espouse his interests; to aid him in his great work; and to pray in his name. To conduce to this end, he has himself furnished them with one common prayer.

"For the satisfaction and assistance of some individuals among us, a sort of spiritual association was established a few years ago; and by means of printed sheets, the following articles were agreed upon, and circulated:—

"First. Every member of this society shall pray, on the first Monday of every month, that the missionaries employed in the conversion of savage and idolatrous nations in all parts of the world may be supported and sustained 'against the wiles of the devil.'

"Secondly. Besides habitual 'watching unto prayer,' every individual, if he be able, shall prostrate himself in mind and body, every Sunday and Wednesday, at five o'clock in the evening, to ask of God, in the name of Jesus Christ—

"1st. That every member of this society may be saved, with all his household, and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"2d. Every member shall add to the list all the friends of God of his acquaintance, and pray for them.

"3d. Every member shall include in his prayer all the children of God, in general, upon all the earth, of whatever religion they may be, supplicating that they may be united more and more in Christ Jesus.

"4th. Every member shall pray that the kingdom of Satan may be at length destroyed, and that the kingdom of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be fully and generally estab-

lished among the innumerable Pagans, Turks, Jews, and nominal Christians.

"5th. Every member shall pray for schoolmasters, superiors, and pious magistrates, of whatever name or rank they may be.

"6th. For faithful pastors, and male and female labourers in the vineyard of the Lord Jesus, who, being themselves devoted to his service, desire, above all things, to bring many other souls to him.

"7th. For the youth, that God may preserve them from the seducing influence of bad example, and lead them to the knowledge of our gracious Redeemer.

"Thirdly. Every Saturday evening, all the members shall ask God to bless the preaching of his holy word on the morrow."

CHAPTER V.

Death of Mrs. Oberlin—Its effect upon Oberlin's mind—Louisa Schepler becomes his housekeeper—Letter from the latter—Letter, taken from a German magazine printed at Tubingen, containing an account of Oberlin and his family, in the year 1793—Death of his eldest son Frederic.

ANIMATED by desires of usefulness, habitually relying on the goodness of their heavenly Father, and stimulating each other to active exertion in the performance of every Christian duty, Oberlin and his beloved Madeleine passed sixteen years in a union cemented by ties of the strongest affection. Their family now consisted of seven children—Frederic, Fidelité Caroline, Charles Conservé, Henry Gottfried, Louisa Charité, Henrietta, and Frederica Bienvenue; all of whom were brought up under the paternal roof.*

On the 18th of January, 1784, it pleased God that an event should take place, which had a most powerful influence both upon the cast of

* "I knew Oberlin," says Mr. Heisch, "as the playfellow and instructer of his children when they were young, and as their friend and counsellor when arrived at years of maturity. In the character of instructer, he so well knew how to mingle affection with earnestness, and even with severity when requisite, that his children both loved and respected him; and in that of a friend, there was an endearing tenderness that not only constituted their happiness, but formed also a constant stimulus to their exertions."

his mind and the whole of his future life. This was the loss of his wife. She died rather suddenly. No unfavourable symptoms, no incipient disease had prepared Oberlin for this distressing separation. When first informed of it, he was so much overpowered as to remain for some moments plunged in the deepest silence, and unable to give utterance to his feelings. At length, after this interval of melancholy stupor, he was observed suddenly to fall on his knees and return thanks to God, that the object of his tenderest solicitude was now beyond the reach or the need of prayer, and that he had crowned the abundance of his mercies toward her, by giving her so easy and gentle a dismissal. He has himself commemorated, in a written fragment, which will be inserted in a future part of this memoir, the emotions by which he was agitated in these moments of bitter suffering. "Upon this occasion," he says, "as upon a thousand others in the course of my life, notwithstanding my overwhelming affliction, I was upheld, by God's gracious assistance, in a remarkable manner."

From that time the passive graces shone as conspicuously in his character as the active virtues had hitherto done. Neither complaint nor murmur escaped his lips. It might be said that he had not ceased to live in the society of the Christian wife whom he had lost. Every day he devoted whole hours to holding communion with her in those abstracted frames of mind which make us almost imagine ourselves

in the presence of those whom we love. A speedy reunion in the mansions of our Father's house was, nevertheless, one of his most cherished desires. "I hope," he would often say, "that the world in which God will reunite me to my beloved wife will soon open to me."

This desire had nothing of a transitory character; it was not the mere result of acute grief, nor the effect of any habitual melancholy. Although his sorrows might have contributed to strengthen it, it had its origin in a religious feeling. Like St. Paul, he desired to depart to be with Christ, which to him was far better. He longed to be able to unite his voice with hers he had lost, in singing the song of the Lamb, and to participate in that "fulness of joy" which "God hath prepared for those who love him." "I have had all my life," he says, in the paper to which allusion has been already made, and which was written the very year he lost his wife, "a desire, occasionally a very strong one, to die, owing, in some degree, to the consciousness of my moral infirmities, and of my frequent derelictions. My affection for my wife and children, and my attachment to my parish, have sometimes checked this desire, though for short intervals only."

These few words seem to lay open the very secret of his soul. While he was blasting rocks, levelling roads, building bridges, fertilizing fields, improving the morals and promoting the happiness of his flock, the expressions just cited prove what was the moving principle by

which he was actuated. That which induced him to become the benefactor of these districts —that which led him to devote so much time to the prosecution of his plans, was the ever-present thought of death and eternity; and the habitual remembrance of the responsibility attached to talents, and to opportunities of usefulness. He knew that his soul would be required of him; he desired that it might be so speedily: and, in order that he might hear the joyful sound, "Well done, good and faithful servant," he dedicated every faculty he possessed to the interests of others, living himself by faith in the Son of God, and resting entirely on his propitiation.

His patience and resignation not only under this, but under every other affliction that it pleased God to award to him during the whole course of his life, were striking and exemplary. After the first bitterness of grief was over, his soul always seemed "to be girding itself up," and, as it were, "stretching its wings" in expectation of that joyful period, when it should leave mortality behind, and soar to the regions of everlasting blessedness—to join "the innumerable company of angels and the general assembly and church of the first-born." "Millions of times," he continues, in the paper mentioned above, "have I besought God to enable me to surrender myself with entire and filial submission to his will, either to live or to die:—and to bring me into such a state of resignation, as neither to wish, nor to say, nor to do, nor to

undertake any thing, but what He, who only is wise and good, sees to be best."

The following extract from a letter which he wrote to a lady, who had been tried by many successive bereavements, in the hope of convincing her that such dispensations are permitted, to strengthen our graces, and to promote our spiritual refinement, will illustrate his lively faith and fervent piety, as well as the simple and original mode in which he was accustomed to pour out the language of his heart in epistolary converse. "I have before me two stones, which are in imitation of precious stones. They are both perfectly alike in colour; they are of the same water, clear, pure, and clean; yet there is a marked difference between them, as to their lustre and brilliancy. One has a dazzling brightness, while the other is dull, so that the eye passes over it, and derives no pleasure from the sight. What can be the reason of such a difference? It is this. The one is cut but in a few *facets;* the other has ten times as many. These *facets* are produced by a very violent operation; it is requisite to cut, to smooth, and polish. Had these stones been endued with life, so as to have been capable of feeling what they underwent, the one which has received eighty *facets* would have thought itself very unhappy, and would have envied the fate of the other, which, having received but eight, had undergone but a tenth part of its sufferings. Nevertheless, the operation being over, it is done for ever: the dif-

ference between the two stones always remains strongly marked; that which has suffered but little, is entirely eclipsed by the other, which alone is held in estimation, and attracts attention. May not this serve to explain the saying of our Saviour, whose words always bear some reference to eternity: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Blessed, whether we contemplate them apart, or in comparison with those who have not passed through so many trials. O! that we were always able to cast ourselves into his arms, like little children—to draw near unto him, like helpless lambs—and ever to ask of him patience, resignation, and entire surrender to his will, faith, trust, and a heartfelt obedience to the commands which he gives to those who are willing to be his disciples. 'The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces,' Isa. xxv, 8."

Mrs. Oberlin's death was deeply felt among the poor people of the Ban de la Roche; for although less active and energetic than her husband, she had always evinced the liveliest interest in their concerns, sought to administer to their wants, both secular and spiritual, and to assuage their griefs.

Her loss was in some degree supplied to her own family by a pious orphan, named Louisa Schepler, who had already lived eight years in Oberlin's service, and who now undertook the management of his household and the care of his children.

She was at this time twenty-three years of age; a sensible, pleasing-looking young woman, of mild and gentle manners, habited in the costume of the peasants of the country. She had been a kind of helper in the village of Waldbach, and long one of its most active and zealous governesses; but her health was beginning to be impaired by the severe colds she took in the snows. This circumstance did not, however, lessen her usefulness; and no sooner had she accepted the station of housekeeper to the *cher papa*, than, refusing offers of marriage, she took the resolution of devoting herself to his service, and would never accept any salary, but lived in his family rather as a friend than a servant. What her few wants required she asked for—nothing more; and on some occasions, when Oberlin endeavoured, through indirect channels, to put money into her hands, she, conjecturing the source from whence it came, uniformly returned it.

The following note, dated "Waldbach, First of the New Year, 1793," addressed by Louisa to her benefactor, is a sweet little proof of her disinterested and grateful affection:—

"Dear and Beloved Papa,—Permit me, at the commencement of the new year, to request a favour which I have long desired. As I am now really independent, that is to say, as I have now no longer my father nor his debts to attend to, I beseech you, dear papa, not to refuse me the favour of making me your adopted

daughter. Do not, I entreat you, give me any more wages; for as you treat me like your child in every other respect, I earnestly wish you to do so in this particular also. Little is needful for the support of my body. My shoes and stockings, and *sabots*, will cost something, but when I want them I can ask you for them, as a child applies to its father.

"O! I entreat you, dear papa, grant me this favour, and condescend to regard me as your most tenderly attached daughter,

"LOUISA SCHEPLER."

The humble request was acceded to, and Louisa was ever afterward considered as one of Oberlin's own children.

I shall here introduce the following interesting letter, because it presents so lively a picture of the domestic happiness enjoyed under the good pastor's roof at Waldbach, and of the mode of proceeding there, at this period. It is dated March 11th, 1793.

"During the space of nearly thirty years, in which M. Oberlin has been Christian pastor of this canton, he has completely changed it. The language is, from an unintelligible *patois*, altered into pure French; the manners of the people, without degenerating, are civilized; and ignorance is banished without injuring the simplicity of their character. Many of the women belonging to his parishes, trained for the purpose under his pastoral care and instruction,

(and called *conductrices*,) assist him in his occupations. They teach reading, writing, and the elements of geography, in the different villages where they reside; and through their medium the children are instructed in many necessary things, but, above all, have the seeds of religion and morality sown in their hearts. The excellence of these schools is so well established and appreciated, that girls of the middle ranks are sent to him from distant parts, and the title of a scholar of Pastor Oberlin is no less than a testimonial of piety, cleverness, and gentle manners. His countenance is open, affectionate, and friendly, and bears a strong impress of benevolence. His conversation is easy, flowing, and full of imagination,* yet always adapted to the capacity of those to whom he is speaking. In the evening we accompanied him a league on his way back to Waldbach. We had a wooded hill to ascend; the sun was just setting, and it was a beautiful evening. 'What sweet thoughts and pious sentiments you have uttered, during this interesting walk,' said M. Oberlin, in a tone of confidence; for he considered us as friends to religion, and servants of God. Our hearts were indeed in unison; and he related to us the circumstances of his past life, and spoke of his views and ideas, and the fear and love of God, in a most touching manner.

* "Although Oberlin narrated with the vivacity of a painter," says Mr. Heisch, who knew him intimately, "he was extremely strict as to facts, and in all his investigations paid the utmost regard to integrity and truth."

Sometimes we stood still to admire the beauties of nature, and at others to listen with earnest attention to his impressive discourse. One moment was particularly affecting; when, stopping about half way up the hill, he answered in the softest tone to our question,—'Ja ich bin glücklich,' ('Yes, I *am* happy.') These words are seldom uttered by an inhabitant of this world, and they were so delightful from the mouth of one who is a stranger to all the favours of fortune—to all the allurements of luxury—and who knows no other joys than those which religion and benevolence impart, that we longed to live like him, that we might also participate in the same happiness.

"The moon rose in all her majesty, and night drew on, before we recollected that the time to return was approaching; when Pastor Oberlin exclaimed, 'If five years are necessary to bring a ray of light from Sirius to this world, though travelling at the rate of twelve millions of miles in a minute, how much swifter must the communication of spirits be! Dan. ix, 21. What is so swift as thought?' and then he imaged to us the facility with which he apprehended we should approach one another in a future state.

"The following morning we set off to return the visit which he had paid us on the preceding day. We found the worthy pastor in his morning gown; it was plain, but whole and clean. He was just on the point of concluding a lecture; his pupils had, like their master,

something soft, indeed almost heavenly, in their look.

"The house stands well, and has, from the garden side, a romantic view; in every part of it that kind of *elegance*, which is the result of order and cleanliness, prevails. The furniture is simple; yet it suggests to you that you are in the residence of no ordinary man; the walls are covered with maps, drawings, and vignettes, and texts of Scripture are written over all the doors. That above the dining-room door is, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.' And over the others are texts enjoining love to God and our neighbour The good man implicitly follows the divine command to write them over the door-posts.* On our first entrance he gave us, each, as a welcome, a printed text, 'Abide in me, and I in you,' 'Seek those things which are above,' &c. His study is a peculiar room, and contains rather a well-chosen, than numerous, selection of books in French and German, chiefly for youth. The walls are covered with engravings, portraits of eminent characters, plates of insects and animals, and coloured drawings of minerals and precious stones; it is, in short, literally papered with useful pictures relative to natural history and other interesting subjects.

"The dinner commenced with a blessing. His children, two maids, and a girl who re-

* See Deut. vi, 6, 7, 8, 9, and xi, 18, 19, 20.

ceives her instruction there, were at the table; there was a remarkable expression of softness in all their countenances.

"Oberlin has a peculiarly happy method of improving occurrences, under the form of similes; and we are mistaken in supposing him a mystic. 'The gospel,' said he, 'is my standard. I should be afraid of trusting myself alone without it.' He then related to us many of the difficulties he had to encounter, and the sacrifices he had to make, at the commencement of his career in the Ban de la Roche. 'But now,' continued he, checking himself, 'let me observe, it is as great a fault to talk of our own virtues as of the faults of others.'

"It is surprising to witness the sound sense, refinement, and superiority of mind, evinced by these simple peasants; the very servants are well educated, and are clothed with that child-like spirit, which is one of the truest tests of real religion. One of them, who is a widow, made many good remarks to us on the duties of married life. 'In order to introduce and preserve domestic peace,' said she, 'let us turn to Him who is peace.'

"I am writing this at his table, while he is busy preparing leather gloves for his peasant children. His family are around him, engaged in their different avocations; his eldest son, Frederic, is giving a lesson to some of the little ones, in which amusement and instruction are judiciously blended; and the *cher papa*, without desisting from his employment, frequently puts

in a word. He took me this morning into his work-shop, where there is a turner's lathe, a press, a complete set of carpenter's tools, also a printing-press, and one for bookbinding. I assisted him in colouring a quire of paper, which is intended for covers of school-books. He gives scarcely any thing to his people but what has been, in some measure, prepared by his own or his children's hands.

"He will never leave this place. A much better living was once offered to him—'No,' said he, 'I have been ten years learning every head in my parish, and obtaining an inventory of their moral, intellectual, and domestic wants; I have laid my plan. I must have ten years to carry it into execution, and the ten following to correct their faults and vices.'

"Pastor Oberlin is too modest and generous not to bear testimony to the worth of his predecessor, who had begun to clear this wilderness, and to raise the superstructure, which he has so beautifully completed.

"Yesterday I found him encircled by four or five families who had been burned out of their houses; he was dividing among them articles of clothing, meat, assignats, books, knives, thimbles, and coloured pictures for the children, whom he placed in a row according to their ages, and then left them to take what they preferred. The most perfect equality reigns in his house; children, servants, boarders, are all treated alike; their places at table change, that each in turn may sit next to him, with the ex-

ception of Louisa, his housekeeper, who of course presides, and his two maids, who sit at the bottom of the table. As it is his custom to salute every member of his family, night and morning, these two little maids come very respectfully curtseying to him, and he always gives them his hand, and inquires after their health, or wishes them good night. All are happy, and appear to owe much of their happiness to him. They seem to be ready to sacrifice their life to save his. The following reply was made by one of his domestics, on his questioning her about her downcast looks during some trivial indisposition: 'I fear, dear papa, there will be no servants in heaven, and that I shall lose the happiness of waiting upon you.'

"Oberlin appears to be looking forward to his eternal home with holy confidence and joyful hope."

The following are specimens of the texts referred to in the preceding letter. They were printed by Oberlin himself. He always kept a large supply of them, and distributed thousands and tens of thousands of them to his friends and visiters, often writing a few appropriate words on the back of the paper, or some short sentence expressive of his affectionate remembrance.

My mother and my brethren
are those who
hear the word of God
and do it.
Luke viii, 21.

And let us consider
one another,
to provoke unto love,
and
to good works.
Heb. x, 24.

Sometimes, instead of a text, a few verses were inscribed on the cards.

Thou, my God, who gav'st me being,
Know'st full well this heart of mine;
What its real wants, its wishes,
Known and mark'd by love divine.
Childlike, then, in *thee* confiding,
On thy word alone I rest;
Grant thy grace, with every virtue
Which I need to please thee best.

Oberlin's house was, as the writer of the preceding letter remarks, literally papered with pictures, inscriptions, verses from the Bible, and directions for missionary and other prayers;

and on the door of one of them the Moravian text-book was fastened. The inscription placed on that of another will give some idea of the cordial and warm reception with which he always greeted his visiters, and formed, indeed, throughout, the law by which they were governed:—

"Constant goodness.
Steadfast sweetness.
Charity vigorous and unalterable."

Toward the latter end of the year 1793, Oberlin's eldest son Frederic, to whom he was most tenderly attached, entered the army as a volunteer, and was one of the first who were killed, being at this time in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

His father's patient resignation and submission to the will of God shone forth in as remarkable a manner on this afflicting occasion as they had done on the death of his wife.

"I went soon afterward," writes Mr. Heisch, "to Waldbach, and naturally expected to find a tinge of melancholy spread over the family at the parsonage; but instead of that, I observed only an air of quiet seriousness, and the usual tone of reciprocal communication was uninterrupted among them. They spoke of Frederic not as of the dead, but as of one gone before them to heaven, where they confidently hoped, sooner or later, to meet him again. Every thing proceeded as usual, except in rather a more serious manner, while they thus con-

versed about him, and it was evident to all around them that they placed the most unlimited confidence in God's unerring goodness."

The firm belief that every event of our lives is under the guidance and direction of a superintending Providence, and that Infinite Wisdom can, from a variety of dispensations, produce a uniformity of good, and an uninterrupted series of benefits, formed, indeed, a leading trait in Oberlin's character; in proportion as he suffered under affliction his mind seemed to open to the consolations of faith; and it is not surprising that the admonitions and example of one so much beloved and respected should have been blessed to other individuals, more especially those of his domestic circle, and that, influenced by the same sentiments, they should have been enabled to utter the same language, and to act upon the same principles. Happy are those who can thus trace the hand of God in every circumstance, prosperous or adverse —who can regard even the heaviest trials as an intended means of sanctification, and of drawing us nearer to Jesus:—and hence, learning to "glory in tribulation," can anticipate with joyful hope that period "when sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

CHAPTER VI.

Unmolested state of the Ban de la Roche during the period of the revolution—Oberlin's generous renunciation of his own interests for the sake of his parishioners—His school for the children of foreigners—His sentiments respecting the payment of tithes—Letter containing a plan for their disbursement—His influence in exciting a spirit of Christian charity among his people—Account of Sophia Bernard, &c.—Oberlin becomes a correspondent of the British and Foreign Bible Society—Letters addressed by him to members of the London committee—Mode of collecting subscriptions and donations for charitable purposes in the Ban de la Roche—Letter to his scholars.

During the period of the revolution, which was at that time agitating the country, and plunging the people into misery and distress, Oberlin was, like the rest of the clergy, deprived of his scanty income. Soon after its commencement, indeed, it had been agreed by the heads of the parish that a collection of one thousand four hundred francs should be made for him by persons going about from house to house for the purpose; but although their benevolent efforts were exerted to the utmost, they could not raise, during the year 1789, more than one thousand one hundred and thirty-three francs, and in the following one not so many as four hundred. This sum therefore, for two successive years, constituted nearly his sole revenue; for no fees were admitted. "My people," he used to say, "are born, married, and buried, free of expense, at least as far as their clergyman is concerned."

At length the reign of terror, which had for the last four years been preparing, by the gradual breaking down of every religious and social tie, raged in all its horror, spreading, like the sirocco of the desert, devastation, famine, and dismay. The Ban de la Roche alone seemed to be an asylum of peace in the midst of war and carnage. Though every kind of worship was interdicted throughout France, and almost all the clergy of Alsace, men of learning, (among whom was his elder brother, Professor Oberlin,) talents, and property, were imprisoned, Pastor Oberlin was allowed to continue his work of benevolence and instruction unmolested.* His house, in fact, became the retreat of many individuals of different religious persuasions, and of distinguished rank, who fled thither, under the influence of terror, from Strasburg and its environs, and who always received the most open-hearted and cordial reception, though it endangered his own situation. "I once," says a gentleman, who was then residing at Waldbach, "saw a chief actor of the revolution in Oberlin's house, and in that at-

* Once, indeed, in the year 1789, he was cited before the supreme council of Alsace, and had to clear himself from the accusation of having induced his parishioners to enrol themselves under the banners of Joseph the Second. He was not merely acquitted, but the court, informed by means of this proceeding of his virtues, and of the good that he had effected, after pronouncing judgment in his favour, expressed regret that so estimable an individual should have been drawn from his solitude, to the interruption of the exercise of his charitable labours.

mosphere he seemed to have lost his sanguinary disposition, and to have changed the fierceness of the tiger for the gentleness of the lamb."

It is pleasing to see how a Christian minister could meet the difficulties of times like these, and how one of Oberlin's courage and aptitude could make the circumstances of so alarming a period bend to his aim of profiting those committed to his charge. I will here insert a paper which he addressed to the younger members of his flock, in 1794, and wherein he took advantage of the actual state of the government to teach them what true republicans should really be :—

"Young people are precious in the sight of God and of good men, when they are truly what they ought to be—noble-minded, courageous, diligent, modest, pious, humble, docile, willing to employ all their energies for the welfare of their families, full of respect toward their superiors, and desirous of keeping the commandments.

"I desire that the numerous members of the French republic should be animated by truly republican sentiments. I wish them to understand that public happiness constitutes private happiness, and that every individual ought therefore to endeavour to live for the public good; and to remember that his actions will only secure the favour and love of God according to the motives from which they are performed.

"We are republicans, when we neither live nor act, nor undertake any thing, nor choose a

profession or situation, nor settle in life, except for the public good.

"We are republicans when, from love to the public, we endeavour, by precept as well as by example, to stimulate our children to active beneficence; and seek to render them useful to others, by turning their attention to such pursuits as are likely to increase the public prosperity.

"We are republicans when we endeavour to imbue the minds of our children with the love of science, and with such knowledge as may be likely, in mature life, to make them useful in the stations they are called to occupy; and when we teach them to 'love their neighbours as themselves.'

"Lastly, we are republicans, when we preserve our children from that self-interested spirit which, at the present day, seems to have gained more ascendency than ever over a nation whose people have, notwithstanding, sworn to regard each other, and to love each other as brethren, but the greater part of whom care only for themselves, and labour only for the public good when they are compelled to do so. Ah! far from us be this infernal spirit, as anti-republican as it is anti-christian.

"O, may you, my young friends, be counted henceforth among the active benefactors of your country.

"O, may you render yourselves worthy of this honourable title, by endeavouring to devote to the public good, and to the general happiness

your strength, your abilities, your leisure, and your talents; and by dedicating to this purpose all your attainments in knowledge, philosophy, and science.

"You will then become precious in the sight of all good men, and God will protect and love you, and cause your undertakings to prosper. He will also one day recompense your faithfulness, by loading you with honour, and glory, and power, and riches, and happiness, and by saying to you, in the presence of the assembled universe, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. xxv, 23. O God, grant that the republic, and all true republicans, may prosper. Amen."

Upon the reopening of the churches, in 1795, that benevolent renunciation of his own interests for the good of his flock, which, as I have frequently had occasion to observe, formed so distinguished a feature in Oberlin's character, was strikingly displayed; for he declared that in consequence of their reduced means he was willing henceforth, as long as God should grant him strength to do so, to serve them without any given salary, and that he wanted no annual collections; adding, that as every one knew how to find his way to the parsonage, he might bring his share, to whatever amount, and at whatever time he pleased; for he considered it unjust that the poor, who were at times unable to procure either salt or bread,

and who formed the greater part of the community, should pay as much as those who were in more affluent circumstances. Nor had they, he assured them, any reason to fear his displeasure, even if they brought nothing at all, since he should consider that it was only for want of ability to do so; and it always afforded him more gratification to relieve than to oppress them. With respect to the payment of the schoolmasters also, they were to adopt the same plan, that is, to contribute according to their means, and to bring whatever they could afford, either for this, or other charitable purposes, to him, in the form of goods, provisions, or cash. This they regularly did; and his faithful Louisa was accustomed to assist him in the judicious distribution of the articles or money thus collected. In return for these gifts, he always presented the donors with a few words of acknowledgment on the back of one of the papers on which his texts were printed, and of which specimens have been given. He always kept the most strict account of every expenditure, and was never known to owe even so much as a single sou to any person. One of the maxims which, among many others, he endeavoured to impress upon the minds of his people, was that they "ought to avoid debts as they would do the evil spirit."

Notwithstanding the poverty of its inhabitants, scarcely a mendicant was ever seen in the valley, unless indeed some pauper from the neighbouring communes, attracted by the well-

known disposition of the pastor and his people, might have wandered thither to implore that assistance which, if deserving, he never failed to receive. "Why do you not work?" was Oberlin's usual interrogation. "Because no one will employ me," was the general reply. "Well, then, I will employ you. There—carry these planks—break those stones—fill that bucket with water—and I will repay you for your trouble."

Such was his usual mode of proceeding; and idle beggars were taught to come there no more.

But how, it will naturally be asked, were Oberlin and his family supported, and even enabled to assist others, when deprived not only of their little income, but also of the annual contributions of their parishioners?

It appears, indeed, to have been owing to the extraordinary interposition of Providence, that they were watched over and cared for in so peculiar a manner, at a time when many individuals were reduced to the most forlorn situation, and compelled to forsake their home and their country. The gospel reduces to very little the sufficiency of the Christian; and as, in the days of greater prosperity, they had accustomed themselves to habits of the strictest economy and the most rigorous self-denial, in order to facilitate their power of assisting others, so now, in the season of adversity, God did "not leave them comfortless," but supplied all their necessary wants, and supported, strengthened,

and blessed them. The principal circumstance that gave Oberlin any uneasiness was the diminution in his means of doing good; and in the year 1794, with the hope of increasing it, he announced his intention of undertaking the charge of ten or twelve pupils whose education should devolve almost entirely upon himself, although he had to provide for his own family of six children, the youngest of whom was now ten years of age, and to superintend their instruction.

The children of several foreigners of distinction were soon committed to his charge: and, in the true spirit of philanthropy, he appropriated a considerable part of the emoluments which he received for their education to the improvements and institutions of his parish.

The duty of devoting a certain portion of his property to charitable purposes was a subject that had weighed heavily on his mind for some years previous to the revolution. He had happened to read one day, with more attention than usual, the accounts of the tithes in the books of Moses, and had been so struck with some of them as to resolve from that moment to devote three tithes of all he possessed to the service of God and the poor. The resolution was no sooner made than put into execution, for whatever Oberlin conceived it to be his duty to do, he conscientiously, and without delay, set about it. From that period till the end of his life, even during the most calamitous seasons of the revolution, he always scrupulously adhered to

the plan, and often said that he "*abounded in wealth.*"

The following letter contains an account of the passages that struck him so particularly, and of the manner in which he set about the dedication of the dîmes :—

"My Dear Friend,—You ask me for some explanation respecting the different tithes which God has commanded us to pay. I will tell you how I manage. I endeavour to devote three tithes of all that I earn, of all that I receive, and of all my revenue, of whatever name or nature it may be, to his service, or to useful objects.

"For this purpose I keep three boxes; the first for the first tithe; the second for the second; and the third box for the third tithe.

"When I cannot pay ready money all at once, I mark how much I owe upon a bit of paper, which I put into the box; and when, on the contrary, a demand occurs which ought to be defrayed by one of the three allotments, and there is not sufficient money deposited, I advance the sum, and make the box my debtor, by marking upon it how much it owes me.

"By this means I am always able to assist in any public or charitable undertaking; and as God has himself declared that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' I look upon this regular disbursement of part of my property rather in the light of a privilege than a burden.

"*The first of the afore-mentioned boxes contains a deposite for the worship of God.*

"I put a paper, with the following verses from the Old Testament written upon it, into this box:—

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.—Lev. xxvii, 30.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.—Mal. iii, 10.

"I devote the contents of this box to the building and repairing of churches and school-rooms; the support of governesses;* and the purchase of Bibles and pious books; in short, to any thing connected with divine worship, or the extension of the knowledge of our Redeemer's kingdom.

"My parishioners are at liberty to recall from this tithe any present that either generosity, or the supposition that I expected it, may have induced them to make me.

"*The second box contains tithes for useful purposes.*

"I have written the following passages in it:—

"Thou shalt duly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat

* For his infant schools.

before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thy hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household, and the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.—Deut. xiv, 22–27.

"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty.—Deut. xvi, 16.

"I employ this tithe for a variety of purposes:—

"1. For the improvement of the roads to the churches and schools.

"2. For the schoolmasters' salaries.

"3. For all works of public utility.

"4. For the little expenses incurred by my becoming godfather.

"5. For Sunday dinners to my poor people of the other villages. [*My parishioners might add to this catalogue.*]

"6. For the churchwardens. [*For whether they do their duty voluntarily from love to God, or make a claim upon me, I always pay them well.*]

"7. For expenses incurred among the peasantry of Belmont, Foudai, and Zolbach.

"8. For what the poor of Waldbach expend, by inviting the poor of the other villages to come and see them.

"9. For the repairing of injuries.

"*The third box contains tithes for the poor.* [That is, it contains the third tithe every three years, or the thirtieth every year.]

"I have written there the following texts:—

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest.—Deut. xiv, 28, 29.

"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God.—Lev. xix, 9, 10.

"I devote the contents of this box to the service of the poor; to the compensation of losses occasioned by fire;* to wood, flannel, and bread, for those who stand in need, &c., &c."

It must not be supposed from this statement, that Oberlin's benevolence was, however, con-

* Oberlin one year devoted part of the contents of this box to the purchase of a large fire-engine, as well as of a small one that could be easily transported to the mountainous districts.

fined to the Ban de la Roche, for the knowledge of several pious and excellent institutions had reached the secluded valley before it spread to the rest of France. One of the first that attracted his attention, as I have observed in a previous chapter, was the Missionary Society. No sooner had he learned that there were pious Christians who left their homes to convey to the benighted heathen the promises of the gospel, than he parted with all his plate, with the exception of one silver spoon,* and contributed the proceeds of the sale to that noble undertaking, as he rightly designated it, only regretting that he was unable to send more.

He was indeed himself actuated by the genuine missionary spirit; and, in the early part of his ministry, he for some time hesitated whether he should not accept an invitation to undertake a station in Pennsylvania. For two years a pastor had in vain been sought to fill the vacant post. When informed of this circumstance, Oberlin, considering it to be the duty of a minister of Christ to repair whither others were unable to go, and thinking that the Ban de la Roche might be more easily provided for than so distant a charge, expressed his readiness to set off. His wife participated in his sentiments; but, while they were waiting for more specific directions, the war broke out between England and America, and prevented their departure. From that time he rejected every station that

* Oberlin bequeathed this silver spoon to the Missionary Institution at Basle.

offered, showing himself to be proof against repeated and urgent solicitations. "Some persons," said he one day, "think it a merit in me to have refused more considerable cures than this; but you," continued he, addressing himself to a military gentleman, who had been expressing his surprise that he had not accepted the charge of larger parishes, "if your general had given you a post to defend, would you quit it without positive orders?" On being answered in the negative, "Well," said he, "God has confided this flock to my care; and why should I abandon it? Where could I find better parishioners, or more grateful hearts?"

His imagination had been powerfully affected also by a description of the wretched condition of the negro slaves in the West Indies, employed in the cultivation of sugar and coffee, which induced him to form the resolution of never again tasting either the one or the other, a resolution to which he strictly adhered, although, having been accustomed to them from his earliest infancy, it cost him some little self-denial to submit to the deprivation.

"His fidelity in great and little things indiscriminately," says Mr. Legrand, "was so scrupulous that he would have believed it displeasing to God, in the remembrance of whose presence he habitually lived, to have written a word, or even a single letter, without care."

His extreme devotedness to the interests of his flock, combined with his peculiarly endearing and affectionate manners, necessarily caused

Oberlin to be loved and revered as a father. Every lip became eloquent in his praise; every voice pronounced his name with grateful benedictions; and the stranger who visited the pine-covered hills and verdant dales of the once wild and forsaken Ban de la Roche, found there, in the place of a set of rude and ignorant savages, an industrious, decent, orderly, and well-informed peasantry, many of whom had been so far initiated into both the doctrines and the spirit of the New Testament, as to live in the exercise of that love which is said to be the "fulfilling of the law," and which the apostle inculcates as a necessary mark of true religion when he says, "He who loveth God must love his brother also."

The exemplary conduct and sincere piety of some of these individuals, indeed, proved that they had not received "the grace of God in vain." Among other fruits of faith, their charity to orphans was particularly striking. When a poor father or mother died, leaving a numerous family, it was a thing of course for some poor person to offer to take upon himself the charge and care of the orphans; so that many of the households contained one or two of these adopted children, and they seldom thought of mentioning that they were not their own.

Three individuals, more particularly noted in the annals of the Ban de la Roche for their disinterested benevolence, were Sophia Bernard and Catherine Scheidecker, of Foudai, and Maria Schepler, of the hamlet of La Hutte, near

Belmont, whose names will appear again in a subsequent part of this memoir.

The former, Sophia Bernard, although depending for subsistence on her own labour and the scanty produce of a morsel of land, resolved in early life to devote herself entirely to the care of orphans, and with this view collected, first under her father's roof, and afterward in the old parsonage, several children, whose parents were of different denominations, and taught them to spin cotton in order to assist in their maintenance, which would otherwise have devolved entirely on herself. Before she married, and when her little family already consisted of seven children, she and her sister Madeleine* received a letter from a poor tailor, named Thomas, who lived in a neighbouring Roman Catholic village, entreating them, from what he had heard of their charitable deeds, to take charge of his three little children, all of whom were under four years old, as his wife was near her confinement, and he was utterly unable to provide for them.

Following the benevolent impulse of the moment, or rather the dictates of that benevolence by which they were habitually actuated, the two sisters immediately set out, although the evening was already far advanced, and they had dangerous roads to traverse, with their baskets on their backs. At length, regardless

* Now Madeleine Bernard, the régent of Belmont's wife, a truly exemplary character. She and Sophia married two brothers.

of fatigue and exertion, they reached the summit of the mountain upon which Thomas's cottage was situated. Softly approaching it, they peeped in at the window, and were confirmed in the truth of the statement they had received, by the evident marks of wretchedness and poverty that the little apartment exhibited. Upon entering it, they found the little creatures in as forlorn a condition as the poor man had described, miserably nursed, and weak and diseased from neglect. They, therefore, without further deliberation, wrapped them up in flannel, packed them in the baskets at their backs, and trudged home with them. But, as their father's house would not accommodate so large an accession to the family, Sophia hired a servant girl, and an additional room, where she fed, clothed, nourished, and educated them, so that they became strong, healthy, and industrious. On some of his neighbours afterward asking the tailor how he could allow his children to be brought up by Protestants, "O," he replied, "if they make such good Protestants of them as they are themselves, I shall thank them for it."

Such are the delightful fruits of genuine Christian benevolence! and how strikingly does this fact speak for the admonition of many in another rank of life from that in which these poor women shone so brightly.

While the good effects of Oberlin's instructions and example were thus shedding their benign influence upon the more immediate

scene of his pastoral labours, his name and zeal became known in England; and in the year 1804, on the first establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society in that country, it was judged expedient to open a correspondence with him, for the sake of forming a central point for the distribution of Bibles in France.

Being firmly assured that the Scriptures are indeed "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," he had long and ardently desired their general circulation. He therefore gladly hailed the proposition, and became the first foreign correspondent of that society. The large principle on which this institution was established admirably suited the mind of Oberlin; and having for the course of twenty years prayed expressly for missionaries, as well as for a still longer period, "Thy kingdom come," it would have been extremely unnatural if he had not supported a society, whose express object it is to open channels for conveying the streams of the "waters of life" to those parched and desolate portions of the earth which they have not yet pervaded, and to hold out the joyful invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

In conjunction with his youngest son, Henry Gottfried, a young man of truly eminent piety and much evangelical zeal, Oberlin, under the direction of the London committee, shortly afterward organized a little society at Waldbach; and through its medium, depositories

were established in different parts of France, and more than ten thousand copies of the New Testament put in circulation. This was some years before the Paris Bible Society was instituted. The Ban de la Roche became also in a manner the cradle of ladies' Bible associations, in consequence of a letter addressed by the late venerable pastor to the committee of the parent society, in which he made mention of the three humble but admirable women, whose names, and especially that of Sophia Bernard, have already appeared in this chapter, as suitable persons for taking an active part in this work of love, either by reading the Bible to their neighbours, or by adopting the simple and ingenious plan of lending them the sacred volume. The Rev. John Owen, in his History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, adverts to this circumstance, acknowledging the obligations we are under to that extraordinary man, whom he describes as "uniting the simplicity of a patriarch with the zeal of an apostle."

The letter referred to is so interesting, that no apology appears necessary for inserting it. It is dated Waldbach, Nov. 3, 1804:—

"Accept, my dearest friend, our most unfeigned thanks for the sum of thirty pounds which you have transmitted to us as a kind present from some English friends, for the purpose of purchasing French and German Bibles to distribute among the poor inhabitants of the

Ban de la Roche and its neighbouring villages, in which there are people of four different religious denominations, namely, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, and Anabaptists. May God, for Christ's sake, impart his blessing to this act of Christian benevolence, in order that his name may be glorified, and his kingdom come.

"You will be glad to learn some particulars respecting the use which I intend to make of this money.

"I have ordered, and expect soon to receive, fifty copies of the French Protestant Bible printed at Basle. Though the type is rather too small for country people, yet we have great reason to bless God for having enabled us to procure even these. In the mean time, I have made a list of such persons as I consider most deserving of so valuable a present. Among the large number of individuals and families to whom a Bible is a most welcome gift, I first put down such characters as are most active in promoting the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom, and in doing good to the bodies and souls of their fellow-creatures.

"1. The *first* Bible shall be given as a present to Sophia Bernard, who is one of the most excellent women I know, and, indeed, an ornament to my parish. While unmarried, she undertook, with the consent of her parents, the support and education of three helpless boys, whom their inhuman father had often trampled under his feet, and treated in a manner too

shocking to relate, when, nearly starving with hunger, they ventured to cry out for food. Soon afterward she proved the happy means of saving the lives of three Roman Catholic children, who, without her assistance, would have fallen a prey to want and famine. Thus she had the management of six children, to whom several more were added, belonging to parents of three several denominations. She then hired a house and a servant girl, and supported the whole of the family entirely by her own work, and the little money acquired by the industry of the children, whom she taught to spin cotton. At the same time she proved the greatest blessing to the whole village where she lived; for it would be impossible for any one to be more industrious, frugal, clean, cheerful, and edifying by her whole walk and conversation; more ready for every good word and work; more mild and affectionate, and more firm and resolute in dangers, than she was. Satan once so enraged some of her enemies, that they threatened to destroy her old tottering cottage, but God was graciously pleased to preserve her. A fine youth, of a generous disposition, made her an offer of marriage, and as she appeared unwilling to accept him, he declared that, if necessary, he would wait ten years to gain her hand. She then acknowledged that her motive for refusing him was the grief it would occasion her to part from her little orphans. "He who takes the mother takes the children also," replied the young man. On this

condition the marriage took place, and all the children were brought up under their mutual care in the most excellent manner. They have lately taken in some other orphans, whom they are training up in the fear and love of God. Though these excellent people pass for rather rich, yet their income is so limited, and their benevolence so extensive, that they sometimes hardly know how to furnish themselves with a new suit of necessary clothes. I intend to give *them* a Bible, because their own is very often lent out in different Roman Catholic villages.

"2. A *second* Bible I intend to give to an excellent woman, named Maria Schepler, who lives at the opposite end of my extensive parish, where the cold is more severe, and the ground unfruitful, so that nearly all the householders are poor people, who must lend their clothes to each other when they intend to go to the Lord's supper. This poor woman is also a very remarkable character; and I could say much in her praise were I to enter into particulars. Though distressed and afflicted in her own person and circumstances, yet she is a mother, benefactress, and teacher, to the whole village in which she lives, and to some neighbouring districts too. She takes the most lively interest in all that relates to the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth, and often groans under a sense of the grievous inroads made by the powers of darkness. She, also, has brought up several orphans without receiving the smallest recompense; keeps a free school for females, and

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makes it a practice to lend her Bible to such as are entirely deprived of it.

"3. A *third* Bible present I intend to make to an excellent widow woman, Catherine Scheidecker, who is, like the former, a mother to orphans, and keeps a free school; so also does another young woman, who instructs little children, in a neighbouring village, in such knowledge as may render them useful members of society.*

"I might easily enumerate many more characters of a similar description, whose eyes will overflow with grateful tears, if they are favoured with the present of a Bible. I will make one observation as to the Bibles which you may send us. It is necessary, in our parts, to have a number of copies in readiness to lend out to the people of the neighbouring districts, most of whom are Roman Catholics; for if they possess a Bible of their own, they are in danger of having it taken away by some blind popish priests; whereas, if it is only lent to them, they are generally permitted to return it.

"Finally, farewell! May God be with you, with your congregation, and with all those kind friends who have so nobly come forward to our assistance.

"JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN."

I shall also insert the following letter, addressed by Oberlin to a friend in England about

* Catherine Banzet, who voluntarily attended all the knitting schools.

six months after the last. It alludes to the exertions of his predecessor, M. Stouber, and relates some anecdotes, to which reference was made at the commencement of this work, respecting the avidity with which the Scriptures were seized upon at their first introduction into the Ban de la Roche:—an avidity which greatly increased in Oberlin's time, more especially when it became known that he possessed, through the medium of the British and Foreign Bible Society, an ample supply of copies for distribution.

"*Waldbach, June* 17, 1805.

"WHAT shall I say, dearest friend—how shall I thank the honourable Bible Society for the gift of twenty pounds for the spreading of the kingdom of Jesus Christ? I will entreat God for a rich blessing upon the institution, and for wisdom to enable me to dispose of its gift in the most effectual manner.

"You ask if there is a desire for Bibles in the interior of France. I have various reasons for believing that there is; though my personal observation and knowledge extend to our own neighbourhood only.* I must, however, refer to what happened a few years ago. The little Steinthal was formerly the only Protestant spot throughout the whole kingdom of France which enjoyed perfect freedom of religious worship. This the Roman Catholic clergy could hardly

* Oberlin never went far from home. He had never even seen Paris, nor made any journeys except to Fribourg and to St. Dizier.

bear, nor comprehend how God could permit it; and envy and displeasure were but too visible in the countenances of some of them when they happened to converse with any of our Protestant clergy on the subject. About fifty years ago, God sent my excellent predecessor, the Rev. Mr. Stouber, here; a truly apostolic man, who obtained considerable reputation throughout all the Catholic neighbourhood. Many Roman Catholics openly declared of him—'This is a man of God;' and the Lord so blessed his labours, that the Steinthal villages began to be distinguished from all the Roman Catholic villages in the vicinity. He sent for fifty French Protestant Bibles from Basle, and lent them in the schools, even with permission to the scholars to take them home. It must be observed that he had them divided into three parts, bound in strong parchment, making one hundred and fifty volumes.

"He also distributed many other good French books. The result of this measure was, that the neighbours were made attentive to the Bible. A Roman Catholic one day entered a house in this place, and after some desultory talk, during which time he had carefully cast his eye around the apartment, he espied in the window a thick book with a lock; having heard that Bibles had this appearance, he took it up, looked at the title, and asked 'whether one could have such a Bible for a crown?' On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he threw down a crown upon the table, and ran hastily

out of the cottage and away to his own village, with the Bible under his arm, to the astonishment of every one. From that time the demand continually increased; several hundred small Bibles from Basle and Biela were partly sold, partly given, and partly lent; and all the Biela Bibles in folio, as well as many in quarto, were procured from Switzerland, and dispersed among the Roman Catholics. Yet many copies were taken by the Romish priests from their people and burned; sometimes a violent contention took place about it.

"A priest once surprised one of his people over the Bible, snatched it from him with bitter reproaches, and was going off with it; when the man, who possessed some spirit, and had often heard from his neighbours of the priests taking away their Bibles, jumped up, snatched his hanger, placed himself before the door, and cried out, 'Reverend sir, replace the Bible on the table. I respect your character; but a thief is no pastor. I will certainly cut you in pieces, rather than suffer you to steal a Bible which has been kindly lent me.' The priest restored the Bible, but ordered the man to return it to the owner; and thus many were returned to us.

"Before the revolution, I never gave any Bibles to the Roman Catholics with my own hands, but always through those of my parishioners; since the revolution I have had more freedom, so that I may even let the Roman Catholics take the sacrament in our church, a circumstance that has often hap-

pened.* Now, the priests excite a suspicion about the Swiss Bibles, so that many of their people do not know what to do respecting them. I am, however, in hopes of soon procuring some of the Protestant Bibles, which are now printing at Paris. About a fortnight ago, I had the unexpected pleasure of receiving the thanks of an emigrant ex-priest for a Parisian New Testament. I wrote to him that I should readily offer him a whole Bible, had I any other than a Swiss edition, which might appear to him suspicious, though it was so to none who examined it by the original. He replied he would thankfully accept it. At last he came to me in person, and also took a German Bible, and some other German books, having learned German during his emigration. I beg leave to add that many French gentlemen of respectability have accepted Bibles from me with, apparently, sincere joy; and lately a lady came several leagues on horseback in order to request one of me."

Although through Oberlin's agency the Holy Scriptures were not only circulated abroad, but also among all the Protestants in his extensive

* "Oberlin's tolerance," says the Rev. F. Cunningham, "was almost unbounded. He administered the sacrament to Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists at the same time, and, because they would not eat the same bread, he had, on the plate, bread of different kinds, wafer, leavened and unleavened. In every thing the same spirit appeared; and it extended not only to his Catholic, but also to his Jewish neighbours, and made him many friends among them all."

parishes, and in the surrounding Roman Catholic villages, there was not at this time any *regularly constituted* Bible Society in the Ban de la Roche.

"The inhabitants of the different villages," says Mrs. Rauscher,* "seem to be actuated by some secret and spontaneous movement. They assemble together in the evening of certain days, when, after reading a few chapters of the Bible, they all kneel down and join in imploring the divine blessing upon the whole village, as well as upon the parish at large, and upon every institution designed to circulate the truths of the gospel and to bring people nearer to God. They then make a collection, which is deposited in a box kept for the purpose, and reserved there till the time arrives for transmitting it to those Bible and Missionary Societies whose annual reports show that they stand in the greatest need."

A reference to those reports will prove that the collections made on some of these occasions amounted to very considerable sums.†

Having been themselves refreshed, and cheered, and comforted, by the perusal of the sacred volume, Oberlin's parishioners contributed their little donations in aid of the great cause, with a liberality and readiness that

* Frederica Bienvenue, Oberlin's youngest daughter, who was married, in the year 1806, to the Rev. Mr. Rauscher, of Barr.

† See the Third, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Annual Reports of the Protestant Paris Bible Society, &c.

proved they were influenced in doing so by that spirit of love which the blessed gospel inculcates. Their own moral wilderness had been made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose," by the vivifying rays of the Sun of righteousness, and they naturally and earnestly desired that *other* "waste places might break forth into joy and sing together," and that the "word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified."

I will conclude this chapter with the following sweet little letter, addressed by Pastor Oberlin to his scholars, on their having presented him with some garlands in remembrance of the seventieth anniversary of his birth.

"*Waldbach, September 16th*, 1810.

"My Dear Scholars,—I am very sensible of the honour you have intended me, in sending your garlands as a token of your remembrance of my seventieth birth-day, completed the 31st of last August. You seem, however, to have forgotten that an honour which one is conscious of not deserving, is in itself humiliating and abasing. If, by my feeble exertions, I have been enabled to be of some utility to you, all the honour belongs to God, who has kindled in my heart the love I bear you, and who has given and preserved my strength till this period to carry forward my heart's desire, which is your good.

"The beautiful flowers with which your great Creator adorned our country, gave you the means of presenting me with this testimony

of your united love. These flowers will very soon fade, but the impression they have made on my heart will never die, and I earnestly pray that you may become unfading flowers in the paradise of God.

"May he bless you, and may he bless the persons who labour for your instruction, with perseverance and faithfulness, that you may prosper, and become useful in the service of our dear and beloved Saviour.

"But I have still one wish:—a wish, that, though I am *old* in years, is always *fresh* in my heart:—a wish that reigns predominant in my thoughts, and never forsakes me. It is that my parish might make one solemn feast before God, a general and universal dedication, and one in which all persons without distinction might partake, every one according to his respective ability. That is, a dedication of the heart, in honour and remembrance of, and in faith in Him, who shed his blood for us in Gethsemane, and permitted himself to be smitten, scourged, and spit upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, that we might receive the heaven which our sins had forfeited. This is the dedication that I so much desire every soul in my parish might join together to make,—even the surrender of himself to Jesus, each one as he is, with all his faults, with all his sins, in order to find in him pardon, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.—Your affectionate papa,

"JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN."

CHAPTER VII.

Henry Oberlin's removal to Riga—His sister Henrietta's marriage—Their return to Waldbach—Letter from Oberlin to P. J. Heisch, Esq.—Letter from Henry Oberlin to ditto—Mr. Legrand's settlement in the Ban de la Roche—Introduction of cotton-spinning; silk riband manufactory, &c.—Termination of a long-impending lawsuit—Henry Oberlin's death—His father's resignation on that occasion, displayed in a letter to Mr. Heisch.

In the year 1808, Henry Gottfried Oberlin, who has been already mentioned as his father's active coadjutor in the distribution of Bibles, left the Protestant theological school at Strasburg, of which he had for the last two years been superintendent, and went to reside as private tutor in the family of Count Richter, at Riga.

His sister Henrietta likewise removed into Russia during the same year, having married the Rev. Mr. Graff, a missionary on the banks of the Wolga.

Oberlin's advancing age, and increasing inability for that very active exertion which the peculiar situation of his parish required, and which he had been accustomed to use, induced the former, however, in the year 1813, and Mr. and Mrs. Graff, with their family of young children, in the subsequent one, to come and take up their residence again under the paternal roof at Waldbach.

The following note, addressed by Oberlin to

P. J. Heisch, Esq., speaks of his own increasing weakness, and alludes, with grateful pleasure, to Henry's return :—

"DEAR, NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN FRIEND,—On the 5th of December, God restored to me my son Henry Gottfried from Russia, who now relieves me from part of my labour, though there is still so much left to be done that six of us could find ample employment. Your remembrance and letter have given me exceeding joy, and I only regret the impossibility of having answered you before. My situation is unique in its way; and my labour seems to increase as my strength decreases, especially the strength of my eyes. For these several years past I have been repeatedly threatened with sudden death.* Now, thank God, I am very well.

"May God be with you, dear and not to be forgotten friend, and with your dear family. It gives me no concern to think that we shall not see each other again in this world ;—

* Oberlin had a most extraordinary and serious illness during the period of the revolution, in 1794, supposed to be brought on by over exertion, and he never appeared to have entirely overcome the shock that his constitution underwent. The prevailing disposition of the mind sometimes displays itself during the intervals of delirium, and, while his fever lasted, he often distressed poor Louisa, by perpetually calling upon her to bring him thousands and thousands for the furtherance of his plans. He used often to speak afterward of the state of his mind during this illness, and of the distinct ideas he had been enabled to form of the difference between the natural and spiritual man.

in the next our intercourse will be more frequent, more easy, and more delightful. Adieu.

"Your aged friend of seventy-three,

"J. F. OBERLIN.

"My sincere respects to the Rev. Dr. Steinkopff."

Henry also wrote to Mr. Heisch about the same time, and as his letter contains some particulars of his truly interesting family, and of various circumstances to which I shall afterward have to refer, I insert it:—

"*Waldbach, December 11th*, 1813.

"HIGHLY HONOURED SIR, my valued friend, and former teacher,—My father received your friendly letter on the 10th of April, and he allows me the pleasure of replying to part of it.

"The Steinthal has, during the last few years, witnessed many melancholy, but also many cheering events. Conflagrations, formerly so rare, have destroyed many houses in most of the villages; even the beautiful parsonage of Rothau fell, a few years ago, a prey to the flames. We have also lost since that period several of the most worthy inhabitants of our valley, who, both in word and deed, were bright and shining examples to their contemporaries; such were, for instance, Catherine Gagnière and Catherine Banzet. We must likewise include among our apparent adversities the circumstance of cotton-spinning having been on the decline for several years, and as a similar circumstance occurs with regard to

weaving, many families have been thrown into great distress. But God, who has always had an open eye upon the Steinthal, and extended a helping hand toward it, has also manifested himself in the present juncture. Besides the excellent magistrates (*maires*) with whom the whole of my dear father's parish is blessed, God has given us, in the person of the Count Lezay Marnesia, a prefect who entertains an extraordinary affection for the people of the Steinthal. Through his means in particular, and the striking interposition of Providence, the long-pending law-suit about the forests, which had been so oppressive to the inhabitants, has been brought to an amicable conclusion this year. It also pleased God to send, a short time since, a gentleman into this country who formerly kept a riband manufactory in Alsace, and who takes a great interest in effectually assisting the inhabitants of the Steinthal. Our good and excellent Louisa Schepler is still alive, and always, in conjunction with my dear father, observing the same fidelity and self-devotion in the performance of her duties. We, his children, have been very much dispersed, but we were much more so a little time ago than we are now. It is, indeed, remarkable how we are concentrated in the Steinthal. My brother Charles has been for some years past clergyman of Rothau.* My sister Fred-

* Charles Conservé, Oberlin's second son, was born in 1776. In the year 1803 he married Sophia Catherine Franck, of Strasburg, the widow of an officer named Be-

erica, who married the Rev. Mr. Rauscher, now resides at Barr, where Mr. Rauscher keeps a school, and also exercises his ministerial functions. I am myself, in fine, come to the Steinthal from Russia, or Livonia, though not by the shortest way. I wrote to you, respected friend, from Riga, under the date of August 2d, 1811. I wrote also at a later period to Dr Steinkopff, but I never received an answer from your country. I ought to have mentioned above, that the gentleman who is introducing the ribband manufactory into the Steinthal is a native of Basle; perhaps he is not unknown to you. It is Mr. Legrand, who was formerly a member of the Directory in Switzerland. My dear sister Louisa Charité is married to a good worthy man, the Rev. Peter Witz, of Colmar. She, as well as dear Frederica, has several children, and so also has sister Henrietta, in Russia. Our beloved sister Fidelité has been for several years lost to us in this world, which grieves *me* in particular, even now. The good Fidelité!—what a faithful sister she was!—as faithful a sister as she was a mother and wife.*

rard. On account of his father's advancing age, he was induced, in 1806, to relieve him of part of his pastoral duties, by accepting the living of Rothau, at which place he still resides.

* Fidelité Caroline Oberlin was married, in 1795, to the Rev. James Wolff, of Mittelbergheim. She died May 9th, 1809, leaving two little girls, who soon followed their mother to the grave. Her death was a great affliction to her near connections, but especially to Henry, to whom she was remarkably endeared, and to her father. In

"I shall now conclude, as it is possible that my dear father and Louisa may wish to add a word themselves.

"I remain ever your grateful old pupil and friend,

"HENRY GOTTFRIED OBERLIN."

Although, on Oberlin's first arrival in the Ban de la Roche, the population consisted of eighty or a hundred families only, it increased in the course of a few years to five or six hundred, constituting altogether three thousand souls.

To provide employment for so great a number of persons, even supposing that five hundred could be employed during four or five months of the year, in the cultivation of land, and that one-third were infants and infirm persons incapable of work, became a most important object; and gave rise to the introduction of various branches of mechanical industry, adapted

speaking of this circumstance, Mr. Heisch, the long and intimate friend of the family, says, "I particularly recollect the warm attachment that subsisted between Oberlin's daughter Fidelité, his son Henry, and himself. O, he did love his children most tenderly! If I am not mistaken, I saw him weep but once, and that was when he married his daughter Fidelité to Mr. Wolff. Tears of joy, in the prospect of her happiness, were then mingled with those tears of grief, which a separation from this beloved child could not but occasion. Some time after he repeatedly visited her at Mittelbergheim, and I had once or twice the pleasure of accompanying him. It is scarcely possible for any one, who was not an eye-witness to this scene, to form an idea of the tender affection that subsisted between father and daughter."

to local circumstances; such, for instance, as straw-platting, knitting, and dying with the plants of the country. The former was introduced by an invalid captain, whose gratitude for the kind reception he had met with from Oberlin, induced him to second the views of his benefactor, by contributing an art with which necessity had made him acquainted.

Besides these employments, Oberlin had succeeded in making cotton-spinning a source of great emolument to the Steinthal; but the introduction of machinery into the surrounding villages deprived them of this source of profit, and seemed likely to reduce them to their former state of necessity and want. In this emergency they were succoured by the Messrs. Legrand, who removed their manufactory of ribands from the Upper Rhine to the Steinthal.

In the course of a short time, through the exertions of this benevolent and highly respectable family, industry and happiness again smiled in the valley: for, while the introduction of the silk manufactory caused trade to be carried on with renewed vigour, and gave employment to several hundred hands, it was attended with another great advantage, too seldom experienced in manufacturing districts; this was, that the riband looms were distributed about the houses in the different villages, so that, contrary to the usual custom, the children could remain while at work under the eye of their parents, instead of being exposed to the contaminating influence of bad example.

"Conducted by Providence," says Mr. Legrand, in a letter addressed to the Baron de Gérando, "into this remote valley, I was the more struck with the sterility of its soil, its straw-thatched cottages, the apparent poverty of its inhabitants, and the simplicity of their fare, (consisting chiefly of potatoes,) from the contrast which these external appearances formed to the cultivated conversation which I enjoyed with almost every individual I met while traversing its five villages, and the frankness and *naïveté* of the children, who extended to me their little hands. I had often heard of Pastor Oberlin, and eagerly sought his acquaintance. He gave me the most hospitable reception, and anticipated my desire to know more of the history of the little colony whose manners had surprised me so greatly, by placing in my hands the annals of his parish. I there found an unconnected, but detailed history of the institutions for general instruction founded by his predecessor, and continued by himself.

"It is now four years since I removed here with my family; and the pleasure of residing in the midst of a people whose manners are softened and whose minds are enlightened by the instructions which they receive from their earliest infancy, more than reconciles us to the privations which we must necessarily experience in a valley separated from the rest of the world by a chain of surrounding mountains."

The law-suit mentioned in the preceding letter from Henry Oberlin was one which had

been carried on for eighty or ninety years, between the peasantry of the Ban and the lords of the territory, to the great detriment of both parties, and grief of Oberlin; who, however, took no steps toward the adjustment of the difficulty until sanctioned by the magistracy. This sanction he received; for the prefect of the Lower Rhine, anxious to see so ruinous an affair terminated, applied to him for aid, and the good pastor, happy to render it, by his private conversations and public discourses at length effected an agreement advantageous to both sides. What so many years had not been able to effect, Oberlin—the mild and gentle Oberlin—brought about by a few conciliatory words. The prefect was desirous that the inhabitants should not be allowed to forget to whom they were indebted for the restoration of peace. At his suggestion, the mayors in deputation presented to their pastor the pen with which M. de Lezay had signed the solemn engagement, entreating him to suspend it in his study as a trophy of the victory which his habitual beneficence of character had, under the divine blessing, enabled him to gain over long-continued animosity and bad feeling. He modestly complied with their request, and was often heard to say that the day on which that pen was used, June 6th, 1813, was one of the happiest of his life.*

* For several years this memorable pen retained its station in his study; but it at length disappeared, without any one being able to tell what had become of it.

I must now advert to an affecting event, which happened in Oberlin's family in the winter of 1817. This was the death of his son Henry Gottfried, who had only resided under the paternal roof for about three years after his return from Russia, before he was summoned hence to taste, as we have every reason to believe, of the joys of heaven.

"God's ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts:" and it sometimes pleases him to remove to a better country, and to a higher state of existence, those whom we had fondly imagined would become as shining lights in the world, and instruments devoted to his service; as though to remind us that he can effect his own purposes in what way and in what manner he sees best, without the aid of short-sighted, and, at the best, fallible creatures like ourselves.

The immediate occasion of Henry's death was supposed to arise from a cold, which he took in assisting to extinguish a fire that had broken out in the night in a town on his route, as he was making, in 1816, a circuit of eighteen hundred miles in the south of France, with a view to inspect the state of the Protestant churches, and to ascertain the means of supplying them more generally with the Holy Scriptures.

The fatigue attending the remainder of the journey, added to the seeds of incipient disease, had so shattered his constitution, that, soon after arriving in his native valley, he was induced to

remove to Rothau, instead of remaining at Waldbach, in order to receive the benefit of his brother Charles's advice, who, in addition to his clerical functions, was a medical practitioner. On perceiving, however, that the complaint rapidly gained ground, he desired, with the greatest resignation and composure, to be conveyed home again to his father's house that he might die there.

So universally was Oberlin beloved, that his parishioners seized every opportunity of proving their attachment to him and to his family; and on this occasion a truly affecting scene presented itself. No sooner was Henry's request made known in the village, than twelve peasants immediately presented themselves at the parsonage-house, and offered to carry him upon a litter to Waldbach, which is about six miles distant from Rothau. He could not, however, bear exposure to the open air, and it was therefore found expedient to place him in a covered cart; but, as it slowly proceeded through the valley, the faithful peasants walked before it, carefully removing every stone, that the beloved invalid might experience as little inconvenience as possible from jolting over the rough roads.

A few weeks after his arrival under the paternal roof, his life, which had promised such extensive usefulness, drew near its close. Faith, mingled with pious resignation to the will of his heavenly Father, who was thus early pleased to call him to himself, was strikingly exhibited in his last moments, and on the sixteenth of

November, 1817, without a struggle or a sigh, he sweetly "slept in Jesus."*

A few particulars of his close are given in the notes of the sermon which his father preached on the occasion of his death. I shall here insert a translation of them from the original manuscript.

"My son Henry Gottfried, in the midst of distressing bodily anguish, (for as to his mental powers, he enjoyed the full and clear use of them till the last moment of his life,) and under the pressure of acute and lingering sufferings, often said, 'O mercy! mercy! O God! hast thou then ceased to be merciful? O, it is a hard, hard, hard thing to die!'

"Half or a quarter of an hour before expiring his countenance exhibited less suffering, and he said, (although with considerable difficulty,) 'Now a little repose—a little consolation—a little joy.' Then he often repeated, 'From death unto life'—'From death unto life.'

"At length he presented his trembling hand to place it in mine; he pressed mine very sensibly; and retained it in his own, 'from death unto life,' for without our perceiving it he ceased to breathe. Twice, believing him gone, Louisa

* His premature and lamented death is thus recorded in the Fourteenth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society:—"Your committee think it due to the late Rev. Henry Oberlin, of Waldbach, in Alsace, to bear their testimony to that zeal by which he was urged to sacrifice his valuable life, in exertions for distributing the Holy Scriptures among his countrymen."

Schepler closed his eyes, but they opened again and were raised on high."

Henry Oberlin was buried in the churchyard of Foudai, where a monument of wood, surrounded by willows, is erected to his memory.

His venerable father was graciously supported under this heavy stroke, and in his discourse over the grave of his son spoke tenderly and familiarly of the departed, as having only preceded them a little way in their pilgrimage, soon to be overtaken, and for ever reunited to those whom he had left behind. The following letter to his friend, Mr. Heisch, exhibits the disinterested manner in which he contemplated his own irreparable loss, when dwelling upon his son's removal to eternal glory.

"*Waldbach, in the Steinthal, Jan. 8th*, 1818.

"Accept, my dear, not to be forgotten friend, my sincere and heartfelt thanks for the many proofs of your continued affectionate remembrance. Your name is inscribed on my heart; and yet I find it difficult to give you any assurance of it, being extremely engaged with labours that are continually increasing, while the use of my bodily powers is greatly diminished. I particularly suffer in my eyes, which sometimes altogether refuse me their service, notwithstanding the excellent spectacles you presented to me, and one pair of which Louisa gratefully uses.

"We all sincerely rejoiced at the departure

of our Henry from this world; for besides having been subjected during his whole life to a chain of complicated sufferings, he had suffered for some months past (ever since his missionary journey in France) with peculiar severity, so that his emaciated appearance awakened every one's sympathy, and neither medicines nor any thing else could procure him any real alleviation or respite from pain. In consequence of the warm recommendations of our friends, we were induced to call in Dr. Stückalberger, a very clever physician of Basle, a few weeks before our Henry's decease; but no sooner had he seen him, and become acquainted with his symptoms, than he said, 'I shall not touch dear Mr. Oberlin with any medicine or remedy, nay, not even with medical advice, being perfectly convinced that if, on the one hand, I may hope to effect any good, or even may effect it, I shall, on the other hand, do more harm than it may again be in my power to remedy.' This was both kind and judicious; and I had been endeavouring to persuade the other physicians to adopt the same plan, though in vain; for, with the utmost kindness, they were resolved to do all in their power to assist him. God had, in this case, reserved to himself the exclusive prerogative of affording effectual help. Henry, in addition to that spirit of universal benevolence by which he was animated, felt a peculiar interest for two nations, Livonia, together with the whole of Russia, and France. No doubt our and his good Lord now assigns to him some more ex-

tensive sphere of activity than he could have had here, not only, perhaps, for the benefit of these two nations, but even for that of other nations and other individuals. May we be his servants; no matter whether here or there, if we can but be faithful in his service, and of some utility to others.

"Henry received your letter of the 17th of October, as well as the elegant silver pencil-cases, and commissioned me to return you his sincerest thanks. He gave them as a remembrance of you to his brother Charles Conservé, clergyman of Rothau, who has shown him extraordinary kindness both as a physician and a brother.

"Louisa Schepler, and all our dear friends here, thank you cordially for your remembrance, and assure you of their uninterrupted affection and recollection.

"God grant that you may become useful in his service.

"Adieu, my long endeared friend!

"Your obliged and faithful, &c.

"JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN."

CHAPTER VIII.

Medal presented to Oberlin by the Royal Agricultural Society of Paris—Oberlin's private character—Mr. Owen's etter, containing an account of a Ban de la Roche sabbath —Oberlin's ministry—sermons—ministerial labours, &c. —His paternal influence over his flock—Questions addressed to his parishioners—Circulars.

NOTWITHSTANDING Oberlin's advancing age, and the loss he had experienced in the death of his son, the Ban de la Roche still witnessed a succession of useful improvements, and a progress in civilization and prosperity. So much delighted were his friends at Strasburg and at Paris with witnessing the success of his indefatigable exertions, that, in the year 1818, they agreed to collect, without his knowledge, documents of the good which he had achieved, and to submit them to the Royal and Central Agricultural Society of Paris.

M. le Comte François de Neufchâteau, who had repeatedly visited the Steinthal, was deputed to this office, and requested to propose the vote of a gold medal to the pastor of Waldbach, in acknowledgment of the services which he had rendered, during more than half a century, to agriculture in particular, and to mankind in general.

"If you would behold an instance of what may be effected in any country for the advancement of agriculture and the interests of hu-

manity," said he, when addressing the society upon this occasion, "quit for a moment the banks of the Seine, and ascend one of the steepest summits of the Vosges Mountains. Friends of the plough, and of human happiness, come and behold the Ban de la Roche! Climb with me the rocks, so sublimely piled upon each other, which separate this canton from the rest of the world, and though the country and the climate may at first sight appear forbidding, I will venture to promise you an ample recompense for the fatigue of your excursion.

"As for myself, after having formed the administration of the department of the Vosges, in 1790, and presided over it, in 1791, I had, in 1793, to travel over those mountains as a commissioner of the government, at the very period when the parishes of Rothau and Waldbach, before that time dependant on the principality of Salm, were united to the department. I have, therefore, been long acquainted with the valuable services rendered, for more than fifty years, to the Ban de la Roche, by John Frederic Oberlin. Ever since that time, and to the advanced age of seventy-eight, he has persevered in carrying forward the interesting reformation first suggested and commenced by his virtue, piety, and zeal. He has refused invitations to more important and more lucrative situations, lest the Ban de la Roche should relapse into its former desolate state; and, by his extraordinary efforts and unabated exertions, he averted from his parishioners, in the

years 1812, 1816, and 1817, the horrors of approaching famine.*

"Such a benefactor of mankind deserves the veneration and the gratitude of all good men; and it gives me peculiar pleasure to present you with the opportunity of acknowledging, in the person of M. Oberlin, not a single act, but a whole life, devoted to agricultural improvements, and to the diffusion of useful knowledge among the inhabitants of a wild and uncultivated district.

* * * * *

* * * * *

"We have already ascertained that there is in France uncultivated land sufficient for the formation of five thousand villages. When we wish to organize these colonies, Waldbach will present a perfect model; and, in the thirty or forty rural hamlets which already exist, there is not one, even among the most flourishing, in which social economy is carried to a higher degree of perfection, or in which the annals of the Ban de la Roche may not be studied with advantage."

* The new crop of potatoes that Oberlin had introduced formed the principal subsistence of the people during those disastrous years, when the season was so cold and rainy that they could not get in two-thirds of the corn at all; and the scarcity was so great, that poor little children, exhausted with hunger, were seen to drop down in the streets. A sack of wheat during that time of distress rose to one hundred and forty-five francs, and the potatoes to nearly one sou apiece.

The precise acquaintance which the inhabitants of the

On the conclusion of this report, the proposed tribute of affectionate gratitude was, by unanimous consent, awarded to M. Oberlin; upon which the Baron de Gérando, counsellor of state, to whose care it was consigned, expressed the gratification he should have in presenting it to the venerable pastor, not only because he regarded it as an act of justice due to his extraordinary services, but also because it would afford such great pleasure to the inhabitants of the Vosges valleys, to find their beloved benefactor, guide, counsellor, and friend, regarded as an individual deserving of this token of public admiration and gratitude.

But while Oberlin was thus gaining the meed of universal esteem by his acts of public beneficence, his domestic virtues were endearing him more and more to his family circle, where they always displayed themselves in the most truly amiable light. I shall, therefore, now reverse the picture, and present my readers with a view of Oberlin in his personal and more private, as well as in his ministerial character. In this he will be found to shine as brightly as in his public capacity; thereby manifesting the pureness and the extent of that Christian principle, which constrained not only the great movements of his life, but his minutest actions.

Oberlin, in his person, was handsome, rather

Ban de la Roche had acquired, through Oberlin's assistance, with the vegetable productions of their canton, was believed to be the means of preventing the most distressing diseases.

under the usual height, but remarkably dignified in his appearance. There was, however, nothing affected in his manner of carrying himself. His outward garb was evidently the mark of the master mind within him. Dressed, as he usually was when out of doors, in a cocked hat, and with a red riband at his chest, the decoration of the legion of honour,* his air was so imposing as to call forth the attention and respect of every one who saw him. His manner was grave, but affectionate; condescending, but in the highest degree gentlemanly. His courtesy toward his parishioners was constantly testified. He did not pass those among them who were grown up, without pulling off his hat and speaking a few words of kindness: nor any of the children without shaking them by the hand, or showing them some little act of attention. "Jesus," he often said, "loved children. It is to such as resemble them that he promises the kingdom of heaven." He was always extremely anxious, in every part of his conduct, to prevent the possibility of misconstruction on the part of those over whom he watched. "On one occasion," says one of my friends who visited the Ban de la Roche a few years ago, "as we were walking up a hill, he had the arm of

* This decoration was awarded to Oberlin by Louis XVIII. in acknowledgment of the services he had rendered to an extensive population. "The king," he used to say, "has had the goodness to send me this decoration; but what have I done to merit it? Who, in my situation, would not have acted as I have done, and perhaps better still?"

his son-in-law, while my wife was walking alone. Fearing this might be considered self-indulgent or disrespectful by some of his younger parishioners, whom we happened to pass, he stopped to make an apology to them for this apparent disregard of the law of civility and kindness."*

His manner of accosting his inferiors was perfectly unique. "When our postilion, who appeared to have some previous acquaintance with the Ban de la Roche, met him," continues the same friend, "he and the old man were instantly with their hats lowered to the ground, while Oberlin stepped forward to shake him by the hand, and to make some inquiry about his friends at Strasburg. This was done with all the sweetness of Christian feeling, while there was no departure from the dignity with which his situation and circumstances naturally invested him. Good manners prevailed in these valleys to an extent that is rarely witnessed. The practice of the pastor produced the happiest effects upon the mass of the population. The habitual politeness of the French character might have assisted in this work, but I have never witnessed in any other poor people such remarkable and universal suavity—such complete refinement as in these hardy mountaineers.

"As the 'dear father' had the highest regard for his people, so he had the best opinion of

* It must be remembered that Oberlin was then in his eightieth year.

their skill, and wondered that any one should doubt about it. I happened one day, when we were driven by a man who seemed to go on in a hazardous manner, to say, 'Take care.' The old man appeared hurt at this admonition, both on my account and on that of the driver. He assured me that all was safe; and at the end of our drive took the greatest pains to prevent any feeling of vexation which might arise in the mind of his parishioner."

Oberlin's habits were very orderly. Every thing seemed to have its place in his house. There was a box to deposite every morsel of litter, and which could only be of service in the stove. His books, a great number of which were in manuscript, were perfectly arranged, and written in a beautiful hand, for it was a point of duty with him, as before stated by Mr. Legrand, to give every letter its perfect formation. His Bible was marked throughout with different coloured ink, according to the application which he, in the course of his reading, had made of different passages.

In conversation he was fluent and very unreserved; willing to communicate all he knew, and, on the other hand, inquisitive as to every thing which he saw, and from which it appeared likely he could derive information.

His activity was as astonishing as his zeal; he never rode on horseback if he could help it, still less in the inside of a carriage; and was accustomed, till prevented by increasing infirmity, to climb the steepest summits of the

Vosges, or penetrate through pathless snows regardless of cold or danger, in order to visit the sick, and administer religious consolation to the dying; often too, after all the varied and arduous duties of the day, would he travel to Strasburg in the night to procure medicines, or to obtain assistance or information from his friends in that city, that not a day might be lost to the interests of his beloved Steinthal.*

The superiority of his intellectual powers appeared in all he said and in all he did; and he possessed great influence over others, every body loving and obeying him absolutely, though without servility. His mind was of a most kind, yet of a very energetic and decided order; though as he seldom, if ever, went from home, he had seen little of the world, and, except in his younger years, read little but his Bible. His conversation was never more eloquent, nor his views more expanded, than when he talked on the subject of the extension of the kingdom of God, and when he narrated to his boys, as he would frequently do, particulars of the life and adventures of Dr. Vanderkemp, the mis-

* Oberlin was, at one time, not only minister, schoolmaster, farmer, and mechanic, but also general physician to his parish; the knowledge of medicine which he had acquired during his residence in Mr. Ziegenhagen's family having qualified him for the post. He also learned to open veins, and established a dispensary; and when his ministerial functions would no longer allow of his devoting so much time to the purpose as it required, he delegated the office to his son Charles, and to a young man of talent whom he had sent to study at Strasburg.

sionary, Vincent de Paul, and others, by which means he riveted their attention, and excited the warmest feelings of their hearts. His views of religion were of a very simple and elevated cast: "no cloud of doubt crossed the serene atmosphere of his tranquil joys:"—he continually looked at God as his "heavenly Father," present with him, and rested all his hopes in Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

As the villages in Oberlin's parish were too far apart to admit his preaching in them all every week, he took each of the three churches in rotation. The peasants made an arrangement to come in turns with a horse to fetch him every Sunday morning, and to take him home to partake of their dinner after the sermon. It was always a festival for every family who could thus entertain the "dear father," and afforded him an opportunity of conversing about their temporal and spiritual wants. He made a point, when the little repast was ended, of seeing the children of the house one by one in succession, according to their age, and of talking to them like an affectionate father, in language adapted to their respective capacities, as well as of making a present to each.

I cannot here refrain from inserting the lively picture which Mr. Owen has drawn, in his own admirable manner, of a Ban de la Roche sabbath; and in which he also makes an allusion to those three excellent women whose names well deserve to be put upon record with that of their pastor.

"*Basle, September* 16, 1818.

"The place from which my last was dated, Waldbach, has completely filled my mind, and laid such hold on my warmest affections, that I can scarcely bring myself to think, or speak, or write, on any thing but Pastor Oberlin, and his Ban de la Roche. You will remember that the first foreign letter which awakened an interest in our minds,—the letter which made its way most directly to our hearts, and which, at the celebration of our first anniversary, produced the strongest, and, if I may judge of others by myself, the most lasting impression upon us all,—was that wherein this venerable pastor reported the distribution he proposed to make of the Bibles assigned to him, and drew, with the hand of a master, the characters of those women who laboured with him in the gospel, and to whom, as the highest remuneration he could bestow, and their ambition coveted, a Bible was to be presented.*

"I cannot describe the sensations with which I entered the mountainous parish, containing five villages and three churches, in which this primitive evangelist, who for more than half a century has occupied this station, exercises his functions; and still less those with which I entered his residence, and approached his venerable person. The reception he gave me was such as from the profound humility of his character might have been anticipated. My

* See page 96.

visit to him and his flock was wholly unexpected; and when I announced to him, in my introduction, that I appeared before him as the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to testify, on their part, the respect and affection with which they regarded him, as one of the earliest and most interesting of their foreign correspondents, the good man took me by the hand, and drew me gently toward the seat which he usually occupies, exclaiming, but without any turbulence of either voice or manner, 'Sir, this is too great an honour:—how shall I answer words like these?' After the first emotions had subsided, our conversation became familiar; and as it never ceased, from that time to the moment of our separation, to turn more or less upon the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, as they appeared in the small scale of his own or the great scale of the Bible Society's labours, it never ceased to be deeply interesting, and pregnant with edification.

"The Sunday exhibited this venerable man in the pastoral character, under which it had been so much my desire, might it but be permitted me, to see him. As he makes the circuit of his churches, the turn on this Sunday belonged to Belmont, distant about half a league from the parsonage of Waldbach. At ten o'clock we began to move. Mr. Oberlin took the lead in his ministerial attire, a large beaver and flowing wig, mounted on a horse brought for that purpose, according to custom, by one of

the inhabitants of the village, whose turn it was to have the honour of fetching his pastor, and receiving him to dinner at his table. I rode as nearly beside him as the narrow track would allow. Mr. Rönneberg, accompanied by Mr. Daniel Legrand, followed. The rear was brought up by the villager before mentioned, carrying a leathern bag, slung across his shoulders, which contained the other part of the minister's dress, his books, &c.; and a respectable peasant as an attendant on the general cavalcade. I will not detain you by particulars, which, however interesting, would draw me too far from the main object of my attention. I will only say, that the appearance of the congregation, their neat and becoming costume, their order, and their seriousness, together with the fervour, tenderness, and simplicity, with which the good minister addressed them, both in his sermon in the morning and his catechetical lecture in the afternoon, conveyed to my mind the most delightful impression—that of a sincere and elevated devotion. The interval between the services was passed, partly in dining at the house of the happy villager, (for the duty of fetching and entertaining their pastor is, in the estimation of these simple people, a privilege of the highest order,) and partly in visiting some of the excellent individuals, both men and women, but particularly the latter, in which this part of the parish abounds. The affability and graceful condescension with which the pastor saluted every member of his flock,

wherever he met them, and the affectionate reverence with which young and old returned the salutation, were peculiarly pleasing: it was, on both sides, if a ceremony at all, the ceremony of the heart. On our return to the parsonage, the evening was passed in edifying conversation, and concluded by a French hymn, in which all the household united. On the ensuing morning I had the honour of conveying my venerable host, amid the bowings of his parishioners, who gazed with wonder at the unusual sight of their stationary pastor seated in a travelling carriage, to the house of Messrs. Legrand, at Foudai, another of the villages in this extensive parish. Here we breakfasted; and, after much pleasing conversation with this amiable, benevolent, and well-informed family, I had the high honour of being introduced to Sophia Bernard and Catherine Scheidecker! Maria Schepler, the second on the list of this memorable trio, had, I found, been removed to her rest: the two whom I have mentioned, and who now stood before me, remained to fill up the measure of their usefulness in the work of their Lord. Never shall I forget the manner in which these interesting peasants received me, when, addressing them by name, I told them that I had known them nearly fourteen years, and that the account of their services, communicated to us by the pastor whom they so greatly assisted, had been instrumental in stirring up the zeal of many to labour after their example. 'O, sir,'

said Sophia Bernard, the tears filling her eyes at the time, 'this does indeed humble us;' adding many pious remarks in relation to their obscurity, the imperfection of their works, and the honour they considered it to labour for Him who had done so much, yea, every thing, for them. The scene was truly affecting. It was not without many an effort that I tore myself from it, and hurried from the Ban de la Roche, that seat of simplicity, piety, and true Christian refinement, to resume my journey along the beaten road, and to pursue my object among scenes which, whatever pleasures I had to expect, would suffer in the comparison with those which I had left behind me."

In most of his religious tenets, Oberlin was strictly orthodox and evangelical. The main doctrine that seemed to occupy his whole mind was, that God was his Father. "*Our* Father," as he would not unfrequently say, "and thus we may *always* feel him." The doctrine of sanctification also held a high place in his creed, though, in his discourses, he principally dwelt upon the freeness of the gospel, the willingness of Christ to receive all who come to him in sincerity of heart, the blessed efficacy of prayer, and the absolute necessity of divine grace.

Oberlin was accustomed to preach very alarmingly on the judgment to come, and the punishment of the wicked; though, at the same time, he held out the fatherly love of God to every

returning sinner who would seek him through Jesus Christ. These last-mentioned doctrines may be said to have constituted the leading features of his ministry. He had a remarkable reverence for the Bible, and especially for the books of Moses, and the gospels. He was led to adopt many of the laws of Moses, because, he said, although the ceremonial law is rejected, the object of that law, the glory of God and the good of man, remains, and therefore the law itself ought to be retained. The subjoined note marks a number of passages from the laws of Moses which Oberlin adopted, and which he applied with great force and interest in his own conduct, and in his instructions to his people.*

* *Alms.* Deut. xiv, 28, &c.; xv, 7. Matt. iii, 10.

Prevention of dangers. Deut. xxii, 8. Exod. xxi, 33.

Strangers. Exod. xxii, 21; xxiii, 9. Lev. xix, 33, 34; xxiv, 22. Num. xv, 14. Deut. x, 18, 19; xxiv, 14, 19; xxvi, 12; xxvii, 19.

Also for strangers. Exod. xii, 19. Num. ix, 14.

Solomon appointed a court for strangers: 2 Chron. vi, 32. This court the avarice of the Jews suffered to become a market, and from this market Jesus drove the buyers and sellers.

Fertility. To make a country fertile, it must be guarded from bad seasons, dearth, and famine. Lev. xxvi, 3, 14. Deut. xi, 13, 16. Mal. iii, 10.

Politeness. Rom. xii, 10. 1 Cor. xiii, 4, 5.

To protect ourselves from the evil of war. Lev. xxv, 18, 19. Deut. xxxiii, 28, 29. Prov. i, 33.

Doctors. Exod. xv, 26. 2 Chron. xvi, 12.

Law-suit. Matt. v, 39, 40.

First-fruits. Exod. xxii, 29. Deut. xv, 19.

It may, indeed, be doubted whether there was not much in the history of Moses, as well as in his law, which remarkably adapted itself to Oberlin's experience and views.

This coincidence has been pointed out to me by the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who visited the Ban de la Roche in 1820, when Oberlin was in the eightieth year of his age. He thus writes :—

"In contemplating the history and circumstances of this venerable man, I could not but call to mind that of the patriarch whose law, as well as example, he seems so attentively to have followed. Oberlin, like Moses, was trained to another service than that which he was ultimately called to follow. He had to civilize, as well as to instruct, a people degraded by long habits, deeply rooted, and which sprung from wretchedness and poverty. Like Moses, he was a great lover of order, and had a singular tact for government. Like him, too, he united remarkable meekness with occasional impetuosity, and the truest decision of character. As of Moses at the end of his pilgrimage, so it may be said of Oberlin, his eye was scarcely dim, and his natural force was hardly abated. They each lived to testify of a people following the ways of God, (Deut. xxxiii, 29,) 'Happy art thou,

Payment. Lev. xix, 13. Deut. xxiv, 14. Jer. xxii, 13. Rom. xiii, 8. Matt. v, 25.

Health. Exod. xv, 26. Mal. iv, 2.

Prolonged life. Deut. iv, 40; v, 32, 33; vi, 2; xi, 9; xvii, 20; xxx, 17, 18, 20; xxxii, 46, 47.

O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord;' and now, as they fought the same fight, passed through the same tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they dwell together before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; they have entered into the same joy, and are crowned with the same reward. For there this most holy, most devoted, and most useful man has now opened his eyes to receive the recompense of his faith, his patience, and his labours: and there, as one who hath turned many to righteousness, he will shine in the crown of his Redeemer for ever and ever."

In his sermons Oberlin was simple, energetic, and affectionate, continually speaking to his people under the appellation of "*mes chers amis.*" He appeared to study a colloquial plainness, interspersing his discourses with images and allusions which, had they been addressed to a more refined audience, might have been deemed homely, but which were particularly adapted to the capacities and wants of his secluded villagers. He would frequently introduce biographical anecdotes of persons distinguished for their piety: and the boundless field of nature furnished him with striking illustrations to explain spiritual things. But the Bible itself, "*la chere Bible*," as he exclaimed with tears of gratitude a short time before his last illness, was the grand source of all his instructions. It formed the study of his life, and, as

he said, constituted his own consolation under all trials, the source of his strength, and the ruling principle of his actions: how, then, could he do less than recommend it to others? He was in the habit of citing very largely from it, from the conviction that the simple exposition of the word of God was the best means of efficaciously interesting his flock. His sermons were almost always composed with the greatest care; and when unable, for want of time, to write them out at length, he made at least a tolerably full outline. In general, he committed them scrupulously to memory, but in the pulpit he did not confine himself to the precise words, and would indeed sometimes change the subject altogether, if he saw that another was apparently better suited to the circumstances of his auditory.

Oberlin always concluded the sabbath afternoon's service with catechetical exercise; and as this was intended more particularly for the benefit of the children, he endeavoured to render his afternoon's discourse even more simple than that of the morning had been, and to adapt his language to the age of his younger hearers.

"My friends," said he, upon one of these occasions, wishing to give them, if possible, some idea of eternity, "if a single grain of sand were brought into this room once every hundred years, many centuries must elapse before the floor could be covered. That moment would, however, arrive; but, even when it came, the spirits of the blessed would be still in the

enjoyment of heavenly happiness, for they are immortal; and if a grain of sand were to be brought at the same stated interval for many thousands of centuries, until the room were entirely filled, those happy beings would still be immortal, and eternity would be as boundless as when the first grain was brought."

"The good pastor," says Mrs. Steinkopff, from whose journal the editor has been kindly allowed to make the following extracts, "considers his flock as his own children, and they look up to him with the most profound respect and veneration. I never witnessed so delightfully affecting a scene as the church of Waldbach, quite full, apparently, of attentive people. It stands very near the parsonage, and is plain, neat, and clean, with a gallery all round. When we were there, on the eleventh of June, 1820, it was completely filled with peasants in the costume of the country, and there was not a countenance among them that indicated indifference; the greater part evinced the utmost seriousness and attention. When the revered pastor entered, all stood up; he placed himself before the communion table; it was plain, covered with a white cloth, fringed all round. He first gave out a hymn. When it was sung, he read a prayer from the ritual, during which all knelt, and covered their faces. He then gave out another hymn; after which he went to one part of the church where the children sat, and called over their names, to see if any were absent. Then all knelt down

again while he prayed; then they sung, and he went into the pulpit and gave out his text, after another prayer: 'He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied,' Isa. liii, 11. He spoke in the plainest and most familiar manner, mentioned the errors of the times, against which he warned his hearers, particularly dwelling on the importance of sanctification. 'Those who give themselves up to intemperance,' said he, 'and to the enjoyment of luxuries, without concerning themselves about their poorer brethren, and yet think that with all this they shall go to heaven, because Christ died for sinners, are mistaken. No: the gospel says quite otherwise. We must deny ourselves, lay aside our sins, lead a holy and godly life, and then our blessed Redeemer will save us.' He earnestly warned them against sin. Not a sound was to be heard. Every countenance expressed attention. When he had finished, he read some verses of a hymn expressive of entire devotedness to God. 'My dear friends,' said he, 'may these be the feelings of our hearts, and as such let us sing them.' They then sung them heartily."

The following is a translation:—

"O Lord, thy heavenly grace impart,
And fix my frail inconstant heart;
Henceforth my chief desire shall be,
To dedicate myself to thee—
To thee, my God, to thee!

"Whate'er pursuits my time employ,
One thought shall fill my soul with joy;

That silent, secret thought shall be,
That all my hopes are fix'd on thee—
On thee, my God, on thee!

"Thy glorious eye pervadeth space,
Thou'rt present, Lord, in every place,
And, wheresoe'er my lot may be,
Still shall my spirit cleave to thee—
To thee, my God, to thee!

"Renouncing every worldly thing,
Safe, 'neath the covert of thy wing,
My sweetest thought henceforth shall be,
That all I want I find in thee—
In thee, my God, in thee!"

"Two children were then brought to be baptized; after which he pronounced the blessing. While the people were going out of church another verse was sung. Those nearest the door went out first, all in order and in silence. There are two doors in the church; the pulpit is placed in the middle, next the back, so that the congregation is in front, down each side. Before it stands the communion table. All are seated on benches. There are, against the gallery, half a dozen pictures; one is of our Saviour on the cross."

Dr. Steinkopff writes the following letter, descriptive of the same interesting scene.

"*Waldbach, in the Steinthal, June* 12, 1820.

"I cannot describe the veneration I felt on approaching Mr. Oberlin, that servant of God, and benefactor of man, who, in his eightieth year, is still full of health, vigour, and activity,

and gladly spends his remaining strength in doing good. Serenity and cheerfulness are depicted on his countenance; and he delights in communicating to his Christian friends something of that peace of God which possesses his own soul.

"Yesterday I attended divine service in his church. Notwithstanding a pouring rain, it was completely filled. Mr. Oberlin's assistant in the ministerial office (the Rev. Mr. Graff) assured me that every house in the five villages under his pastoral care was now provided with a Bible, and that every child who came to receive catechetical instruction brought a New Testament with him. But, for the sake of those who applied from a distance, I gladly complied with his wish to furnish him, and his son at Rothau, with one hundred and twenty German Bibles and Testaments. After divine service three Catholic peasants applied for De Sacy's Testament. One paid three francs for a copy. He gave Mr. Oberlin the pleasing information that many of his Catholic neighbours had already procured the New Testament, and were in the constant habit of reading it. Mr. Oberlin's son, who lives on the most friendly terms with the Catholic priest, lately presented his schoolmaster with a copy.

"I accompanied the venerable patriarch in some of his pastoral visits. Wherever he went, respect and affection met him. The children hailed his appearance. They immediately produced their Bibles or Testaments, read to him,

or listened to his truly paternal exhortations and admonitions."*

Every Friday Oberlin conducted a service in German, for the benefit of those inhabitants of the vicinity to whom that language was more familiar than French. His congregation on a Sunday consisted, on an average, of six hundred persons, but on a Friday of two hundred; and Oberlin, laying aside all form, seemed on such occasions more like a grandfather surrounded by his children and grandchildren, to whom he was giving suitable admonition and instruction, than the minister of an extensive parish. In order that no time might be lost, he used to make his female hearers knit stockings during the service, not indeed for themselves or their families, but for their poorer neighbours, as he believed that this charitable employment need not distract their attention, nor interrupt that devotional spirit which generally pervaded the Friday evening assemblies. When he had pursued for half an hour the train of his reflections upon the portion of Scripture which he had just been reading, he would often say to them, "Well, my children, are you not tired? Have you not had enough? Tell me, my friends." To which inquiry his parishioners would generally reply, "No, papa, go on; we should like to hear a little more:" though on some occasions, with characteristic frankness,

* See Appendix to the Seventeenth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

the answer was, "Enough, we think, for one time;" and the good old man would leave off, in the midst of his discourse, or wait a little, and presently resume it, putting the same question again at intervals, until he saw that the attention of his congregation began to flag, or until they, perceiving that he spoke with less ease, would thank him for the things he had said, and beg him to conclude.

Such was the general esteem in which he was held, that Catholics as well as Protestants were fond of attending his preaching. The following conversation took place between an English gentleman and the driver of the car in which it was found necessary to proceed from Schirmeck to Waldbach: no apology can be deemed necessary for introducing it, in illustration of the respect in which Oberlin was universally regarded by the peasantry.

"You are going then to see our good Pastor Oberlin, gentlemen?" said the latter.

"Yes, we are going to see him. Do you know him?"

"Do I know him!" continued the man; "yes, I know him well. I have heard him preach many a time."

"But you are a Catholic, are you not?"

"Yes, we are Catholics, we people of Schirmeck; but that does not prevent our sometimes hearing the good pastor of Waldbach."

"Do you find he preaches well?"

"Yes, very well. He often makes us weep."

The honest charioteer spoke a very intelli-

gible French, quite distinct from the dialect of Schirmeck; and this circumstance, together with a certain touch of military indifference in his manner, not entirely concealed by his fustian jacket, prompted the inquiry whether he had served under Napoleon.

"Yes, sir, you are right; I have been a soldier; and I find that a soldier very easily catches bad habits."

"From all that I have hitherto seen, I find they are easily caught everywhere."

"Very possibly. For myself, I frankly own that I was no better than others; and when I go to hear Pastor Oberlin preach, he makes me feel that I am not too good even now. He is right, the pastor is right; for it is true, very true."

"Yes; but do you not think it is a truth which it is necessary for us to know? and do you not believe that he who makes us feel our errors is one of our best friends?"

"Yes. To be cured, the malady must be known."

"Certainly. You are, then, very happy in having a minister who makes you feel the truth."

"You are right; and I assure you that he is a man who seeks to render himself useful to us in every way."

"Tell me, what has he done, then?"

"What has he done! He has done all that can be done. Let us see: there are so many things. In the first place, this road;—it is he who has made it for us."

"Yes, but it is not absolutely the best road in the world."

"That may be; but look, sir: a few years ago, we could not have passed here, even in a little car like this. The pastor has superintended the whole road, and has even worked at it with his own hands, to encourage others."

"And this little bridge which we are about to cross?"

"Yes, certainly, this bridge also; it is he who has made it."

"He must be rich to effect so many things?"

"To that question I might answer both yes and no."

"How?"

"I might say, Yes; for if he had all which he has given to others, he would be very rich. And I might answer, No; because he keeps nothing for himself,—absolutely nothing; he gives all to the poor; all, sir! all!* You are going to see his house, and must not expect to find it very grand."

But to return to Oberlin himself.

One of his prevailing desires was, that all, to whatever class or denomination they might belong, while conscientiously adhering to their own peculiar creeds, should grow in an acquaintance with those common truths which constitute the essence of the gospel. "Are

* "He has laid up nothing for his children," said Louisa to a clergyman who visited the Ban de la Roche, in September, 1825, "but he will leave them with the benedictions of heaven, and none of them will ever want bread."

you a Christian?" said he to a Catholic gentleman who visited the Ban de la Roche in the autumn of 1820;—"if you are a Christian, my dear friend, we are of the same religion. If you believe in the utter depravity of human nature, in the necessity of repentance, and while adoring God, pray to him to crown your efforts to become better, we are of the same religion. Follow the law traced by the dear Saviour; it only is the true law. All the forms and ceremonies that different sects have added to this law are of little importance."

Perceiving that the eyes of his visiter were directed to a portrait of Luther that hung against the wall of his study, "That man has been," said he, "like every founder of a sect, much applauded and much calumniated. And if you will promise me not to be offended," continued he, smiling, "I will tell you something about him. The popes, for a long time, arrogated to themselves temporal powers and privileges, in a very different spirit from that spirit of humility by which the first followers of Jesus Christ were distinguished. Taking advantage of the credulity of the people, they extended their dominion over nearly the whole of Europe, Turkey alone being free from their sway. Leo X. wished to unite the Christian princes against this latter kingdom, but it was necessary to obtain money in order to secure their co-operation. Leo, who was remarkable for the patronage he afforded to the fine arts, was also in want of funds to finish the famous

cathedral of St. Peter. He devised the plan of selling indulgences. These were notes payable at sight, for the enfranchisement of souls in purgatory; a place never mentioned by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Depots of them were opened in the priests' houses, the monasteries, and even in the public houses. The priests were employed in persuading the people to purchase them. An Augustine monk, the son of a blacksmith, of Eisleben, was led to consider what power these indulgences could possibly possess, and ascending the pulpit, after a priest, who had been inculcating these doctrines, he excited in the minds of his hearers the indignation with which his own was filled. This Augustine monk, whose name was Martin Luther, proceeded to apply to several princes, some of whom espoused his cause. He spread the doctrines of the Reformation; abolished those of the monks; and taking Scripture for his guide, returned to the simple communion of bread and wine; he denied the power of baptism to take away original sin; condemned auricular confession; and declared that the popes and councils had no authority to add any thing to the religion of Jesus Christ and his apostles, seeing that if Jesus Christ had wished his religion to be different from that which he taught, he would himself have delivered it differently. Luther opened the way for a great revolution, and violent means were taken to oppose his proceedings. I will add no more," continued he; "I only wished to

mention the causes and the principal effects of the Reformation. Luther was not the founder of a new religion ; he only brought us back to the religion of Jesus Christ. God will regard all who adhere to the doctrines of his divine Son with equal favour, be they Catholics or Lutherans."

The following anecdotes are illustrative of the paternal influence which Oberlin exercised over his flock, as well as of his readiness to assist those who differed from him in their religious tenets. A young woman of Schirmeck, of the Roman Catholic persuasion, had married a Protestant of Waldbach. This man had enemies ; he was, comparatively speaking, rich, and his fortune might possibly have some connection with the motives of their animosity. The young woman became the mother of a little girl, who, by mutual consent, and in pursuance of the marriage agreement, was to be brought up in the religion of the former, and baptized by the clergyman at Schirmeck. To repair thither it was necessary to take the road over the mountains ; but at the moment of their setting off, they were informed that the enemies of the husband had laid a scheme to waylay them at a particular turn of the road, to spring out upon him when he reached it, and to compel him by menaces and ill treatment to consent to their unjust demands.

Their journey could not very well be delayed, as the priest had been informed of

their intended arrival ; and yet they were afraid to undertake it on account of the impending danger. In this painful dilemma they went to consult Oberlin. He, after exhorting them to place their trust in God, most kindly offered to accompany them, to render his aid and protection should they require it. On arriving at a spot in the forest where there was reason to fear an ambuscade, Oberlin knelt down, and, extending his hands over the young people, exclaimed with a loud voice, "Great God! thou seest wickedness lying in wait, and conspiring mischief. Thou seest innocence in alarm. Almighty God! avert the danger, or give thy children strength to surmount it."

At this moment several men who had been concealed behind a thicket of beach trees, discovered themselves, and rushed forward, uttering the most threatening exclamations. Oberlin took the little infant in his arms, and advanced toward them with a calmness which did not conceal his indignation, yet still left room for the hope of pardon. "There," said he to them, "is the babe which has done you so much injury—which disturbs the peace of your days." Dismayed at the presence of their pastor, whom they little expected to meet in the character of an escort to persons going to perform a Roman Catholic ceremony, and finding from the few words which he had addressed to them that he was not ignorant of their bad designs, they did not attempt to dissimulate, but, confessing their crime, begged pardon of the young

man, and offered terms of reconciliation. Thus providentially rescued from the danger which had threatened them, the young people continued their walk to Schirmeck, while Oberlin returned to Waldbach with the men whom he had thus prevented from doing evil. When they reached the entrance of the village, "My children," said he, as he left them, "remember the day on the mountains, if you wish that I should forget it."

Another morning, (in the early part of his ministry,) as Oberlin was at work in his study, he heard a great noise in the village. Rushing out, he perceived a foreigner whom almost the whole population were loading with abusive and threatening language. "A Jew! a Jew!" resounded on all sides, as the good pastor forced his way through the crowd; and it was with difficulty that he could obtain silence. As soon, however, as he could make himself heard, he rebuked them with great warmth for having proved themselves unworthy the name of Christians by treating the unfortunate stranger in so cruel a manner. He added, that if this poor man wanted the *name* of a Christian, they wanted the *spirit* of Christians. The same enlargement of mind distinguished Oberlin on all occasions. And whatever men might say, he still remembered the apostle's injunction, Gal. vi, 10, "Let us do good unto all men."

I shall conclude this chapter respecting Oberlin's private and ministerial character, with the

following questions, which he addressed to his flock in writing, requiring from them satisfactory replies to each inquiry. They prove that his solicitude for their welfare descended to the smallest details, both with respect to their temporal and spiritual concerns, and that he neglected nothing to which he thought it his duty to call their attention.

Questions addressed by Pastor Oberlin to his Parishioners.

1. Do you, and your family, regularly attend places of religious instruction?

2. Do you never pass a Sunday without employing yourself in some charitable work?

3. Do neither you, nor your wife or children, ever wander in the woods on a Sunday, in search of wild raspberries, strawberries, whortleberries, mulberries, or hazel-nuts, instead of going to church?—and, if you have erred in this manner, will you solemnly promise to do so no more?

4. Are you careful to provide yourself with clean and suitable clothes for going to church in on the Sunday.*

5. Do those who are provided with necessary clothes employ a regular part of their income to procure them for their destitute

* During the first years of Oberlin's residence in the Ban de la Roche, the inhabitants were so miserably off for wearing apparel that they could only go to church by turns, being obliged to borrow each other's clothes in order to appear decently attired.

neighbours, or to relieve their other necessities?

6. Have your civil and ecclesiastical over seers reason to be satisfied with your conduct, and that of the other members of your family?

7. Do you so love and reverence our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as to feel united in the bonds of Christian fellowship with that flock of which he is the Pastor?

8. Do the animals which belong to you cause no injury or inconvenience to others?—(Guard against this, for it would be as fire in tow, and a source of mutual vexation.)

9. Do you give your creditors reason to be satisfied with your honesty and punctuality?—or can they say of you that you are more desirous of purchasing superfluous clothes than of discharging your debts?

10. Have you paid all that is due this quarter to the churchwarden, schoolmaster, and shepherd?

11. Do you punctually contribute your share toward the repairing of the roads?*

* That Oberlin considered the repairing of roads as a religious duty incumbent upon all his parishioners, (since it conduced to the public good,) appears from the following curious and characteristic letter, which he addressed to them, November 9, 1804:—

"*Road between Foudai and Zolbach.*

"Dear Friends of Foudai,—Several persons at Zolbach have long been desirous that a certain road on your district, which runs toward Zolbach, should be mended and put into repair.

"Such a measure would tend greatly to the advantage of

12. Have you, in order to contribute to the general good, planted upon the common at least twice as many trees as there are heads in your family?

13. Have you planted them properly, or only as idle and ignorant people would do, to save themselves trouble?

14. When the magistrate wishes to assemble the commonalty, do you always assist him as far as lies in your power? and, if it be impossible for you to attend yourself, are you careful to inform him of your absence, and to assign a proper reason for it?

15. Do you send your children regularly to school?

16. Do you watch over them as God requires you should do? And is your conduct toward them, as well as your wife's, such

Foudai. But for whose sake will you do it? Will you do it from love to your heavenly Father, to whom you pray every day, and whom in the Lord's Prayer you call Father, and who requires you to prove your faith by your works? Will you do it from love to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, during his stay upon earth, went about doing good, and who has redeemed us in order to make to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? Will you do it from love to God's children who are at Zolbach?—you know that all the services which you render to the children of God, and the followers of Jesus Christ, God regards as done to himself. Will you do it from love to the servants of mammon who are at Zolbach, in order to set them a good example, and to win their affections by your kindness?—or, will you do it from compassion to the animals which your heavenly Father has created, and which he has himself honoured by his covenant with Noah after the deluge? Gen. ix, 9."

as will ensure their affection, respect, and obedience?

17. Are you frugal in the use of wood? And do you contrive to make your fires in as economical a manner as possible?

18. Do you keep a dog unless there be absolute necessity?

19. Have you proper drains in your yard for carrying off the refuse water?

20. Are you, as well as your sons, acquainted with some little handicraft work to employ your spare moments, instead of letting them pass away in idleness?

With regard to the purport of the fifth question, as Oberlin was most particular in devoting a certain share of his own income to the alleviation of the wants of others, and in accustoming himself to the strictest self-denial in order to increase his means of doing good, so he used his utmost endeavours to persuade others to imitate his example, and to avoid any superfluity in their clothes or manner of living, that they might be the better able to assist their poorer neighbours.

He addressed the following advice to the mothers in his parish, on observing that it was becoming a prevalent fashion among them to put cambric frills to their little boys' shirts—an extravagance which he deemed extremely reprehensible:—

"Various mothers are, I observe, beginning to put frills of muslin or of cambric to their

children's shirts. Do not do so, dear friends. Unpick them, cut them off, and seek not to increase the vanity of your children, which is already naturally too great. Cut off all the finery that does not correspond with your station in life, and employ yourselves in clothing the poor families of this extensive parish; many of whom are in an extremely miserable condition.

"Love your neighbours as yourselves. Renounce every superfluity, that you may be the better able to procure necessaries for those who are in want. Be their care-takers—their fathers and their mothers—for it is for this purpose that God has blessed you with more temporal wealth than he has done them. Be merciful. The time may come when you yourselves will stand in need of the mercy of God."

The following note bears also the same import: its superscription is,

"*Surplus of Hay.*

"*Waldbach, March* 13, 1803.

"DEAR FRIENDS,—Is not this one of the two principal commandments—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?' Matt. xxii, 39. Is it not as much as to say, When thy cattle can spare a little of thy hay, supply those who stand in need? But as thou canst not give to all who want, choose those who are in the greatest necessity and poverty, and from among them select such individuals as are most earnest in obeying the commandments of Jesus Christ,

and in endeavouring to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Say to thyself, 'To such will I sell my hay,' and then let them have it at so low a price, that they may rejoice and bless God.

"And afterward be careful to furnish them with the means of liberating themselves from the debt which they have incurred, as far as thou art able to do so.

"Be the father of the poor, and God will be thy father. Remember that it is impossible to love God with thy whole heart, without loving thy neighbour also.

"Tread not in the steps of others, but be thou a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be the father of the poor. Choose those who fear God most. Make good speed about it, for perhaps thou wilt not be much longer in possession of terrestrial riches."

The following little circulars, in allusion to the sixteenth question, addressed at different times by Oberlin to his parishioners, prove how constantly he endeavoured to instil into their minds the necessity of bringing up their children in habits of subordination, and under their own inspection:—

"*Waldbach, February* 27, 1801.

"Dear Friends, Fathers, and Mothers, —I have a request to make to you. You give shepherds to your sheep, to lead them into green pastures to feed, tend, and preserve them from danger, and you do well.

"But have you no fears for your children? Does not Satan go about to tempt them to do wrong? Then give them shepherds likewise, and never allow them to be left to their own devices. Let them work and amuse themselves under proper inspection and superintendence, but let this superintendence be wise, prudent, gentle, kind, and engaging; and while it leads you to take part in their amusements, and to direct, animate, and enliven them, let it also restrain them within due bounds. Whatever it costs you, God will restore it a thousand fold."

"*May* 29, 1803.

"'And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; Am I my brother's keeper?' Gen. iv, 9. The Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel thy brother?' O, may these words resound continually in the ears of every parent, 'Father, where is thy son?' Fathers of Belmont! Fathers of Bellefosse, of Waldbach, of Foudai, and Zolbach! Father, where is thy son? In what village; in what house; in what company? How is he employed? It behooves you to be able to answer these inquiries by night and by day; on Sundays and on working days; wherever you are, and whatever you are doing. You are the guardians of your children; and whether they are employed in work, or in relaxation and amusement, it is your duty to superintend and direct their amusements and pursuits.

"Do it; do it, henceforth, with faithfulness,

vigilance, and zeal; with earnest and secret prayer that God may pardon you for past unfaithfulness, and deliver your sons from the sin and danger into which your carelessness, and want of parental watchfulness, may have driven them. This is the desire of

"Your papa and minister,

"J. F. OBERLIN."

CHAPTER IX.

Oberlin's pastoral visits—Interview between Dr. and Mrs. Steinkopff and the governess of Bellefosse—Their visit to the cottage of Madeleine Krüger; also to that of Sophia Bernard—Letter written by Mrs. C. during a visit to the Ban de la Roche in the summer of 1820—Letter from Mrs. Rauscher to the Paris Bible Society, containing an account of the death of Sophia Bernard, &c.—Amount of the sums raised at different times at Waldbach, in support of various charitable institutions.

IT was not in the pulpit alone that Oberlin sought to make known the truths of the gospel; he was in the habit of paying pastoral visits to all the cottages in his parish; of conversing with their inhabitants on the subjects connected with their eternal welfare, and upon the various plans adopted by benevolent individuals in different parts of the world for the dissemination of religious knowledge.

In the hope of advancing their moral and spiritual welfare, he kept a book in which he made private memoranda respecting their va-

rious states, a task for which the insight he obtained into their respective characters, during his frequent visits, peculiarly qualified him. Among other heads in the book were "Idlers" and "Bad Managers." The ten commandments also furnished him with many distinct heads, under which he made remarks upon the state of his congregation, particularizing the conduct of such persons as he deemed reprehensible, that he might be the better able to adapt his discourses to their edification.

The affectionate manner in which he entered into familiar conversation with them upon such subjects as the diffusion of religious knowledge, the conversion of the heathen, and the exertions of God's devoted servants in bearing to others the "unsearchable riches of Christ," seldom failed to gain their attention, and to awaken in their hearts the warmest interest, while it had, at the same time, a most happy effect upon their manners, inducing, in some of the poor women particularly, a refinement and softness not often met with in persons of the same class, entirely free from pride, awkwardness, forwardness, or rudeness. The following anecdote is a pleasing illustration of these remarks.

During Dr. and Mrs. Steinkopff's visit to the Ban de la Roche, in 1820, they one day took a walk up the side of the mountain with Mr. Graff. The little path they were following led to Bellefosse, whither they were going to pay a visit to Madeleine Krüger, one of the exemplary poor women of that village. Many

peasants had bowed to them as they passed, with an air of courtesy, and the women had addressed them with "I have the honour of saluting you, madam," making at the same time a courtesy that would not have disgraced an English drawing-room. In the middle of a wood, through which the road led, they met a peasant, simply attired, with a pleasing, open countenance, and a basket at her back. "Madam," said she, addressing Mrs. Steinkopff, "I have the honour of saluting you," and a most profound courtesy accompanied her words.

"Good morning! I am rejoiced to have met you, my dear Priscilla," said Mr. Graff, returning the salutation; "I have the pleasure of introducing you to this lady and gentleman, from England. You are well acquainted with the name of the gentleman. He is Dr. Steinkopff, one of the secretaries of the Bible Society which has supplied us with so many Bibles." "O! God be praised for it, my dear sir!" replied the peasant. "Yes, I am well acquainted with your name. I have read the reports which make mention of you. Is it possible," and she joined her hands together, "that I have the honour of seeing you here on earth? Often, yes, often I think of the people of whom I read, and who have been brought to our dear Saviour through the means, through the generosity of that noble society. Ah, what reason have *we* to rejoice, who live in the abundance of spiritual blessings; and how much should we wish to procure the same advantages for those who

are destitute of them! Yes; we are very rich here, in this Ban de la Roche. O, that we may never be unfaithful to that light which God has been pleased to grant us! I am truly delighted with all that I hear, and especially that I have the pleasure of seeing you. I recollect what our good pastor one day said at a funeral, when he saw a poor child weeping bitterly over its grandmother, whom they were going to bury: 'My dear child, instead of weeping for your grandmamma, who is now no more, endeavour to live in a manner conformable to the will of God; believe, dear, in your Saviour, and then, in his good time, you will meet her again in heaven, never more to be separated.' *I* also pray, sir, that it may please God to grant me grace to live the life of a Christian, that when I die, my spirit may join those pure and happy spirits who have done so much good upon earth." "The manners and expression of this interesting young woman," says Mrs. Steinkopff, "were very superior; for with all the animation and sprightliness of the French, much zeal and humility were conspicuous."

"On reaching Bellefosse," continues the latter, "we visited the white-washed cottage of Madeleine Krüger; its neat painted casements and clean steps announced the comfort to be found within. We entered through a kitchen, with a well-furnished dresser and good oven. 'Happily come,' said she, 'you do me too much honour. I am this moment returned, and I should be sorry not to have been here on

your arrival; my door is not yet unlocked;' and as she spoke she reached the key and opened it into a very good room, at one end of which stood her bed with pretty blue cotton curtains, and on one side a long table with benches around it, all as white as wood could be made; on the table lay a Moravian text-book open, in which she had been reading. While we were there, a tall, agreeable-looking man, with a slouched hat, and blue trousers and jacket, came in; he was mayor and schoolmaster at the same time."

They afterward proceeded to the neat, clean, and comfortable cottage of Sophia Bernard, at Foudai, with whom they were to take tea; she met them at the door and showed them into a good-sized room, where, on a long deal table, almost as white as snow, were placed some beautiful flowers, and cups and saucers, cream and cakes, supplied by Mrs. Legrand, who, with her husband, sons, and daughters, drank tea with them. The cups and saucers were very handsome, being of white and yellow china, and had different German sentences upon them. Upon Mrs. Steinkopff's cup this motto was inscribed, "Pray for me, and I will pray for thee." Two benches were placed along the table, and Sophia stood behind to wait. She was, like many of the female peasants of the Steinthal, delicate in her appearance, with a mild and gentle countenance, and peculiar humility of deportment. She looked upon her guests with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, listening

to all that was said, and lifting up her hands in gratitude to God for what she heard concerning the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth by the success of missionary and Bible societies. On the departure of her visiters she knelt down, and prayed very fervently for their protection.

The following letter, written by Mrs. C. during her visit to the Ban de la Roche in the summer of 1820, describes the same scene, and also presents so lively and animated a picture of the venerable pastor and his family, that it cannot but be read with interest and delight.

"*Ban de la Roche, June* 7, 1820.

"My Dearest ——,

* * * * *

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My last letter from Strasburg was written in low spirits; the sun has since shone upon us. We are now in a most uncommon and interesting spot—every thing is novel, but *the One Spirit* which acknowledges the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which is the same; and delightful it is to feel it the same, among other nations and languages. It is confirming to faith to find the children of God in every place looking only to the same Saviour, and built upon the same foundation.

"I wish I had power to convey to you an idea of our present interesting and curious situation. In the first place, I must introduce you to the room I am sitting in. It is perfectly

unique. I should think the floor had never been really cleaned. It is filled with old boxes, and bottles, and pictures, and medicines, and books, but every thing is in its place. Two little beds are stuck up in each corner, and there are a few old chairs, &c. The window looks upon the tops of the mountains, near which we are,—separated from the world; but this is a spot highly favoured, remarkably illuminated by the blessed light of the gospel. I must now tell you of our journey here, and arrival.

"On Saturday morning, after an early breakfast, we left Strasburg. I was rather sorry to quit our comfortable hotel, where I began to feel tolerably settled, and the place, as a *town*, pleased me. We soon left the high road; and as there were no more post-houses, we took a pair of horses to make our way as well as we could through the mountains. The roads were not quite so bad as I expected, yet their narrowness, and the steep precipice on one side, made me nervous. But we were charmed by the interest and beauty of the scenery:—before we had gone far we found the valleys luxuriant in vines and fine trees; a mountain river running through the valley, and presenting different views in every turn of the road. F. and I both thought we had never seen more exquisite *home* scenery. The postilion lost his way, and led us up a delicious valley. Though we enjoyed the scenery, our situation was not very pleasant, and we were anxious to arrive early; for we went perfect strangers, without any introduc-

tion, or having given any warning, but we felt confidence in going among Christian people. Having reached the right road again, we entered the *pass* leading into the Ban de la Roche; it was exceedingly interesting; we were upon the famous road, dug out of the rock, made by Mr. Oberlin himself, and his parishioners, for before he came the place was almost inaccessible.

"However good the roads were in comparison, I could not be satisfied to stay in the carriage, so we walked on to a very romantic little village, where Mr. Legrand and his family live, intimate friends of Mr. Oberlin. I fear you have not seen the book he wrote about Mr. O. and this place;* it gives great interest to it. It is really wonderful what he has effected. We inquired for their house. Mrs. Legrand was pointed out to us; she had a fine open countenance, but was dressed in a far commoner manner than any of our maids, who would appear like ladies in this place. The women here are a hundred years at least behind us in luxury and fashion, and outward appearance; such simplicity I never saw. I will now introduce you to the Legrands, a most cheerful and happy family. Their house is complete in its way, and full of comfort for a foreign habitation. The father and mother, with their two sons, both married to sweet women, live together.

* Letters to the Baron de Gérando, on the Agriculture of the Ban de la Roche, from which extracts have been given in this work.

They seemed beaming with goodness and happiness; evidently most domestic, and I should trust religious people, devotedly attached to Mr. Oberlin, their friend and minister, for whose sake they settled in this place.

"After this pleasant introduction to the Legrands, we again set off for Mr. Oberlin's, a mile and a half further, (a romantic walk through the valley,) accompanied by Mr. Legrand. On the way we met this most venerable and striking man—the perfect picture of what an old man and minister should be. He received us cordially, and we soon felt quite at ease with him. We all proceeded together toward his house, which stands on the top of a hill, surrounded by trees and cottages; if we live to return you shall see my sketch of it.* Owing to the fatigue of our journey, I felt quite overdone on our first arrival. I could see nothing like a mistress in the house; but an old woman, called Louise, dressed in a long woollen jacket and black cotton cap, came to welcome us, and we afterward found that she is an important person at the Ban de la Roche; she is mistress, housekeeper, intimate friend, *maid of all work*, schoolmistress, entertainer of guests, and, I should think, assistant minister, though we have not yet heard her in this capacity. Besides Louise, the son-in-law and daughter, and their six children, live here, two young girls, protegées, and two more maids

* See the sketch of Oberlin's residence, frontispiece.

out of the parish. Mr. Graff, the son-in-law, is a minister, and a very excellent man. There is much religion and simplicity both in him and his wife; but the latter is so devoted to the children that we seldom see her. We were ushered into the dining-room, where stood the table, spread for supper; a great bowl of pottage—a pewter plate and spoon for every body:—the luxury of a common English cottage is not known in the Ban de la Roche. But we see the fruits and feel the blessed effects of religion in its simplest form; it is a great privilege to be here, and I trust will be truly useful to us.

"Tuesday.—We are become more acquainted with this extraordinary people. They are as interesting as they are uncommon. I much regret that I cannot speak the language more fluently; yet I get on as well as I can, and have had a good deal of pleasing communication with them. I only hope you will read Owen's letters, with the description of his visit on a Sunday to this place; it will give you an interest in our present situation.* Also, in the Appendix of the First Bible Society Report, read Mr. Oberlin's letter.† I never knew so well what the *grace* of courtesy was till I saw this remarkable man. He treats the poorest people, and even the children, with an affectionate respect. For instance, his courtesy, kindness, and hospitality to our postilion—he

* See p. 132. † See p. 96.

pulled off his hat when we met him, took him by the hand, and treated him with really tender consideration. He is, I think, more than eighty —one of the handsomest old men I ever remember to have seen—still vigorous in mind and spirit—delighting in his parish—full of fervent charity. He has talked a great deal to F——. The meals are really amusing:—we all sit down to the same table, maids and all, one great dish of pottage or boiled spinach, and a quantity of salad and potatoes, upon which they chiefly live, being placed in the middle. He shakes hands with all the little children as he passes them in the street, speaking particularly to each of them. The effect which such treatment has had in polishing these people, uncivilized and uncultivated as they formerly were, is quite wonderful. They have been taught a variety of things which have enlarged and refined their minds; besides religion—music, geography, drawing, botany, &c. My sketching has been quite a source of amusement in the parish, and my sketch-book handed about from one poor person to another.* If you go into a cottage, they quite expect you will eat and drink with them; a clean cloth

* "As I was one day sketching upon the mountains, a group of poor peasant women attracted my attention, and I begged one of them to stand still for a few moments, that I might sketch her in the costume of her country. 'Ah! madam,' she replied, smiling, 'you shall sketch me. I should like you to have a picture of me in your book, because you will then be led to remember me, and perhaps to *pray* for me.' "

is laid upon a table, washed almost as white as milk, and the new milk, and the great loaf of bread are brought out; yet they are in reality exceedingly poor. Their beds also look exceedingly clean and good. Their dress is simple to the greatest degree. The women and girls all dress alike, even down to the very little children. They wear caps of dark cotton, with black riband, and the hair bound closely under. Every body—maids, children, poor and rich—call Mr. Oberlin their 'dear father,' and never was there a more complete father of a large family. We breakfast at seven; the family upon potatoes boiled with milk and water—a little coffee is provided for us. We dine at twelve, and sup at half past seven. Every thing is in the most primitive style. I never met with such a disinterested people. It is almost impossible to pay them for any service they do for you. In our visits to the poor we have been afraid of offering them money; but we feel anxious to throw in some assistance toward the many important objects which Mr Oberlin is carrying on among them. It is almost past belief what he has done, and with *very limited* means. Three poor dear women are noted for their benevolence; one especially, who is a widow herself with several children, has undertaken to support and bring up three orphan children; and she has lately taken another, from no other principle than abounding Christian charity. One seldom meets with such shining characters. Mr. O.

told Mr. C—— the other day he did not know how to pay Louise, for nothing hurt her so much as offering her money. No one could be more devoted to his service, and that in the most disinterested manner. Her character has impressed me very much. We had a delightful walk to church, about two miles distant, on Sunday morning; the numbers of poor, flocking from the distant villages, dressed in their simple and neat costume, formed a striking object in the scene. It happened to be the Sunday Mr. O. goes to the next parish, where his son requires his assistance in giving prizes to the school children.

"Wednesday evening.—The poor charm me. I never met with any like them; so much spiritualty, humility, and cultivation of mind, with manners that would do honour to a court; yet the homely dress and the simplicity of the peasant are not lost. The state of the schools, the children, and the poor in general, is quite extraordinary, and as much exceeds our parish as ours does the most neglected.

"We have spent our time in the following manner:—Since Sunday the mornings have been very wet; we have therefore been chiefly shut up in our own room, reading, writing, and drawing; the eldest of the Graffs, (Marie,) a sweet, girl, is a good deal with me, to read and to talk to me. The children and young people in the house are becoming fond of me; our being here is quite a gayety and amusement to them. About three o'clock, Mr. Legrand comes

for us, to take us on different excursions, &c. He seems to us one of the kindest persons we ever met with, full of conversation; nothing can exceed the torrent of words they all have. The old gentleman delights in talking to F——, and tells him every thing about himself, his family, his parishes, &c. Our room joins his library, and all the family are free to enter whenever they like. The whole system is most amusing, interesting, and useful. It is a capital example, and instructive for the minister of a parish. There is a spirit of good fellowship and kindness among all the people that is quite delightful. The longer we have been here, the more we have been struck with the uncommon degree of virtue that exists among them. On Monday evening, after sketching Legrand's house, we were taken to the cottage of Sophie Bernard, where we found the table spread in the most complete manner for our tea, a luxury we had not enjoyed since we left England. Here we passed some time, eating, talking, and reading the Bible; and it ended with prayer, by Sophie Bernard, in a sweet and feeling manner. We then had a charming walk through the valley home. Tuesday, in the afternoon, we ascended toward the very top of the mountains, to another of his villages, where we again found some delightful women, and a capital school. This afternoon we have been drinking tea with the Legrands; so comfortable and complete a house and family are rarely to be met with in any country. The three

pairs have each the most complete little dwelling, but under the same roof. Our intercourse with them has been truly pleasant; they have treated us with real Christian kindness.

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"Colmar, Friday evening.—Our scene is again quite changed:—we are returned to the common world; and I now find myself by a comfortable fire at a good hotel, which is quite a luxury after the *primitive* fare of the Ban de la Roche, where we found but little indulgence for the body, though we were treated with genuine hospitality. They live sadly in the clouds. The sun does not appear very often to shine upon them. I never was so struck with the difference of climate as I was to-day, in coming down into the plains. It poured with rain for the last day or two; and all yesterday, in the mountains, every thing was soaked with wet; but on entering the plains the dust began to fly. Delightful and uncommon as is this retreat, I must acknowledge we have rather enjoyed the comforts of the town, and the conveniences of this place. It would be a trial to me to live surrounded and buried by mountains. I could not help rather feeling for Marie Graff, who is sensible of her privations. However, they are happy and contented, and highly blessed; and it is a great privilege to have passed this time with them; an event which must always be valuable through life. We parted from the excellent old man with many

kisses, in the full spirit of Christian love; and the same with the rest of the household. We left them very early, accompanied by many of the family, and proceeded to Foudai, where the Legrands live. Here we breakfasted, and separated with many tears on their part. They are a most warm-hearted people. We then proceeded over such a road as would astonish our Norfolk and Suffolk friends. However, I am thankful that we got through safely. I am getting more bold, and can bear the precipices much better than at first. We passed some beautiful country, but while on the heights, the rain and mist were so great we could not see much.

"The thoughts of the Ban de la Roche, and the impression of this day, have been very pleasant to me, and I have a secret satisfaction and comfort in the prospect of getting to Basle, where I trust I shall have the great consolation of hearing from you."

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The following extract from a letter addressed by Mrs. Rauscher to the Paris Bible Society, presents a delightful picture of the good effects resulting from the instructions and example of her beloved parent, and from an education founded on the Holy Scriptures. It also speaks of the death of Sophia Bernard, an event which happened in the spring of 1822, about two years after the visit alluded to in the preceding interesting letter.

This letter is dated March 14, 1826 :—

"Our parish has now possessed the Holy Scriptures for more than a century, and they form the basis of daily instruction in the schools. In addition to this, the young people have long been in the habit of receiving religious instruction from their pastor, so that a gradual and imperceptible improvement, resembling the growth of plants in a well-cultivated garden, has taken place. You may form some estimate of their moral progress, by the spirit of charity which manifests itself on occasion of the death of a poor father or mother leaving a numerous family; and by the eagerness with which the relations, friends, or neighbours of the deceased, take charge of the children, not to treat them as strangers and dependants, but as members of their own household. These noble actions do not arise from any fixed methodical rules, nor are they confined to any particular epoch; but are owing to the instructions of the good pastor, and to the excellent regulations which he has led his parishioners to adopt.

"This delightful spirit of benevolence particularly manifests itself also, in the eager alacrity with which the young people assist the old and feeble in their rural labours. No sooner are their own tasks completed in the evening, than the signal is given, and they set off to execute in concert some labour, which, by its charitable object, becomes a recreation. Is a new cottage to be built—the young people take

upon themselves the task of collecting the materials together, and of assisting in its erection. Does it happen that a poor man loses his cow—his only support—the whole parish subscribe and raise a sum sufficient to replace it. Is a poor man visited with a misfortune of any kind—he is not the only sufferer—for all his neighbours participate in his affliction, as the apostle says, 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,' 1 Cor. xii, 26.

"These admirable works are doubtless effected by the influence of the Holy Spirit from on high, and by that spirit of Christian benevolence which the attentive and constant perusal of the Holy Scriptures cannot fail to inculcate.

"I will just mention as a single instance, among many others, of the transforming power of religion, that one young woman refused to marry, that she might devote her time, her talents, and her strength, to works of benevolence; and, allowing herself only the bare necessaries of life, she presented the fruits of her assiduous and unremitting industry to the excellent and pious institutions of the present day: she also sold all that she thought she could do without, and gave the produce to such objects as she believed calculated to advance the kingdom of our adorable Lord and Saviour.

"The excellent Sophia Bernard, after whom you inquire, left her dwelling here below to inhabit a brighter mansion, about four years

since, to the great regret of the whole parish, and of the inhabitants of the adjacent villages, who, though of a different religious denomination, considered that they had lost in her a mother, consoler, and comforter.

"Catherine Scheidecker and Maria Miller still live, though the former is very infirm.* They both continue to walk in the path of gospel truth; endeavouring to follow the steps of their divine Master, and praying to him continually for the salvation of their families, and that of all the inhabitants of their parish, as well as for every individual living. Both are poor in the wealth of this world, but rich in faith; and they take every opportunity of evincing their gratitude to God, whose love is shed abroad in their hearts.

"My venerable father sends you the salutation of a friend and brother in Christ Jesus our Lord, and implores the blessing of Almighty God upon you, and the labours of your society. He longs for the joyful period, when, released from his narrow prison-house of clay, he may enter upon that happiness which is to be acquired only through the merits of the Son of God, whose name is 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the Prince of peace.'"

I have already stated that it was the practice in the Ban de la Roche to meet on a particular evening, at stated periods, to read the Scrip-

* She died in the autumn of 1826, and has doubtless received the "crown of life" promised to those who are "faithful unto death."

tures and pray for the divine blessing on various religious institutions, and afterward to make a collection for them. The collections thus made consisted of voluntary contributions according to the abilities of the donor, and the sums that were sometimes raised are truly astonishing; two hundred and ninety francs having been at one time remitted to the Paris Bible Society, and, on another occasion, the sum of five hundred to the London Committee, in furtherance of the same object.

The following extract is taken from a letter addressed by Mr. Daniel Legrand to Professor Kieffer. It is dated July 17, 1825.

"As all that our venerable patriarch receives and possesses is only employed for the advancement of the kingdom of his divine Master, he has again remitted to me one hundred francs, desiring me to forward them to the Bible Society at Paris. His Louise (the name of his faithful housekeeper) has added to it ten francs for the same purpose, and ten for the Missionary Society at Paris. She has a single field, and this is the amount of the rent. May the Lord put a peculiar blessing upon it!"*

* The editor has the pleasure of stating that, since the first edition of this volume was published, Louisa Schepler has received one of the "Prix de Vertu" distributed annually by the Académie Française, in consequence of a bequest by M. de Monthyon. Nearly the whole of this sum, amounting to five thousand francs, she has, with her characteristic disinterestedness, appropriated to benevolent purposes, chiefly among the poor of the Ban de la Roche, who are still in extreme want.

It would be almost repetition to say that these contributions toward *public* institutions did not prevent the inhabitants of the Steinthal from appropriating large sums to charitable societies nearer home. Their beneficence was not, however, confined to their immediate vicinity; for the Foundation for Protestant Theological Students at Strasburg, the Reformed Theological Society at Montauban, and particularly the Protestant Institution for the Education of Poor Children of the Neuhof, near Strasburg, were indebted to Oberlin and his people for much efficient assistance.

What can we add to facts so full of eloquence? While contemplating the rich blessings which Oberlin disseminated around him, and which the pervading influence of his example so greatly augmented, we can only earnestly hope that, the "centre" of Christian benevolence being once moved, "circle after circle" may succeed, and tenfold good be effected.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit," Jer. xvii, 7, 8.

CHAPTER X.

Oberlin's last illness and death—Letter respecting Louisa Schepler found after his decease—His funeral—Prayer delivered upon that occasion—Fragment of an address to his parishioners—Conclusion.

Toward the latter part of Oberlin's life, the infirmities of age precluded his discharging the greater part of his pastoral functions, and he was therefore compelled to delegate the charge to his son-in-law, Mr. Graff, being able to do little more than occupy himself in constant prayers for his beloved flock.* That no individual might be omitted in his intercessions at the throne of grace, he used in the morning to take his church register of baptisms in his hand, and to pray, at stated intervals, during the day, for every person whose name was there mentioned, as well as for the community at large. At all periods of his residence in the Ban de la Roche, Oberlin had a deep feeling of the value of intercessory prayer; and so alive was he upon this point, and so fearful lest he should omit any one whom he particularly wished to remember, that he wrote the names of such

* In consequence of an apoplectic attack, Mr. Graff was compelled to relinquish his pastoral duties in the Ban de la Roche soon after Oberlin's decease, and to remove, with his wife and children, to Strasburg, where he now resides. Mr. Rauscher is his successor, and occupies the parsonage house at Waldbach. Louisa Schepler lives with him and his family.

persons in chalk upon the black door of his chamber.

His strength had greatly diminished; his figure indeed was not bent, but symptoms of infirmity had made their appearance, and his white locks announced advancing age. He no longer left his home but from necessity, and devoted more time than formerly to the labours of his study. Several essays, on various subjects, found since his decease, appear to have been written at this period; and a refutation of Cicero's work, "De Senectute," drawn up in 1825, was probably the last he attempted.

His last illness attacked him suddenly, and was of short duration. On Sunday, the twenty-eighth of May, 1826, he was seized with shiverings and faintings, which lasted till a late hour of the night. The whole of the two following days were passed in alternate consciousness and insensibility; but he often exclaimed, when his strength permitted, "Lord Jesus, take me speedily! Nevertheless, *thy* will be done!" On the evening of Tuesday, Mr. Daniel Legrand, who had been absent on a missionary excursion to Basle, came to see him. He appeared delighted at his return, and, tenderly embracing him, said in a distinct voice, and in an accent of paternal solicitude, "The Lord bless you, and all who are dear to you! May he be with you day and night!" On the Wednesday he appeared considerably weakened by the convulsions he had undergone, and the want of nourishment, as a few drops

of water were all he had been able to taste; he however still intimated by signs, when he was unable to speak, the tender affection which he felt for his children, his friends, his faithful housekeeper, Louisa, and all the members of his flock.

During the night between Wednesday and Thursday, the first of June, which was a very distressing one to his attendants, he continued almost incessantly to utter plaintive cries, as though in pain, though at intervals of ease he would seize the hand of either of his children who happened to be nearest to him, and press it to his heart. When Mr. Legrand arrived, at six o'clock in the morning, from Foudai, he had lost the use of his speech, and his arms and legs had become cold and lifeless. He, however, recovered strength sufficient to take off his cap, join his hands, and raise his eyes for the last time toward heaven; his countenance, as he did so, beaming with faith, joy, and love.

After this effort his eyes closed, never again to open; but it was not till a quarter after eleven that his spirit forsook its mortal tenement, and that the passing bell announced to the inhabitants of the valley that they had lost the pastor, benefactor, and friend, who for nearly sixty years had so unceasingly laboured and prayed for them.

It would be impossible to describe the grief which his loss occasioned: sorrow was depicted on every countenance: and not only in

his own house, but in every cottage throughout his extensive parish, was his memory embalmed by the tears and regrets of those who had participated in his labours of love, or enjoyed the benefit which his unremitted kindness afforded.

His care for those who had any peculiar claims on his affection extended even beyond the grave. He was particularly anxious to evince his gratitude to the excellent Louisa, who had faithfully served him during a period of fifty years; and the following sealed letter, in which he speaks of her good qualities, and begs his children to treat her as a sister, was opened a few days after his death. It is dated Waldbach, August 2, 1811.

"My Very Dear Children,—In leaving you, I commend to your care the faithful nurse who has brought you up—the indefatigable Louise. The services which she has performed for our family are innumerable. Your dear mamma took her under her care before she had attained the age of fifteen; but, even at that early period, she rendered herself useful by her talents, her activity, and her industry. On the premature decease of your beloved parent, she became at once your faithful nurse, your careful instructress, and your adopted mother. Her zeal for doing good extended beyond the confines of our own family. Like a devoted servant of the Lord, she went into all the surrounding villages, where I sent her, to assemble the children together, to instruct

them in God's holy will, to teach them to sing hymns, to direct their attention to the wonderful works of nature, to pray with them, and to communicate to them all the knowledge that she had herself derived from me and your mamma. This was not the labour of a moment; and the innumerable difficulties which opposed themselves to her benevolent employments would have discouraged a thousand others; for while, on the one hand, she had to contend with the wild and froward characters of the children, she had, on the other, to correct their dialect, and, consequently, after having spoken to them in that dialect, which was necessary to make herself understood, to translate all she had said into French. The bad roads, and the inclement weather, so frequent on these mountains, presented another difficulty: but neither sleet, nor rain, nor wind, nor hail, nor deep snows under foot, nor snow falling from above, detained her from her purpose; and when she returned in the evening, though exhausted, wet, and weary, and chilled with excessive cold, she would set herself to attend to my children, and to our household affairs. In this manner she devoted not only her time and abilities, but also her health, and all her bodily powers, to my service, and to the service of our God. For many years past, indeed, her lungs have been injured, and her constitution absolutely ruined, by over fatigue, and by sudden transitions from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, having often, when warm with

walking, crossed the snows and sunk into them to such a depth as to be scarcely able to get out. She received a sufficient recompense, you will perhaps say, in the ample salary that I allowed her. No, dear children, no: since the death of your dear mother, I have never been able to prevail on her to accept the least reward for her services; she employed her own little property in doing good, and in the purchase of her scanty wardrobe; and it was always as a favour that she received from me some slight articles of dress and provisions, which I owed, notwithstanding, to her economy and good management. Judge, dear children, judge of the debt you have contracted, from her services to me, and how far you will ever be from repaying it.

"In times of sickness and affliction, how kindly has she watched over both you and me; how tenderly has she sought to mitigate our pains and to assuage our griefs! Once more I commend her to you. You will evince, by the care that you take of her, how much attention you pay to the last wish of a father who has always endeavoured to inspire you with feelings of gratitude and benevolence:—but, yes; yes;—you will fulfil my wishes. You will be, in your turn, both individually and collectively, all that she has been to you, as far as your means, situation, and opportunity permit. Adieu, my very dear children. Your papa,

"J. F. OBERLIN."

So well disposed were Oberlin's children to fulfil this request, and to coincide in their father's views, that they offered Louisa an equal share of the little property he had left. This, however, she refused, asking nothing more than permission to remain an inmate of the family, and to be allowed to add the honoured name of *Oberlin* to her own. "It is almost superfluous to say," writes one of his children, "that while a descendant of Oberlin's remains, Louise shall want for nothing, at least, until they themselves are destitute."

Oberlin's funeral took place on the fifth of June.

During the four days that intervened between his decease and the simple and affecting ceremony which consigned his remains to their last home, heavy clouds rested on the surrounding mountains, and the rain poured down in incessant torrents: this circumstance did not, however, prevent the inhabitants of the Ban de la Roche, of all ages and conditions, nearer or more remote, from coming to pay a last tribute of respect to the remains of their "dear father," whose venerable countenance they were permitted to see through a glass lid, which, under the direction of Mr. Legrand, covered the coffin, which was placed in his study.

Early in the morning of the day fixed on for the interment, the clouds cleared away, and the sun shone with its wonted brilliancy. As they left the house, the president of the consistory of Barr, the Rev. Mr. Jaeglé, placed the cleri-

cal robes of the late pastor on his coffin, the vice-president placed his Bible upon it, and the mayor affixed to the funeral pall the decoration of the legion of honour. At the conclusion of this ceremony, ten or twelve young females, who had been standing around the bier, began to sing a hymn in chorus, and at two o'clock the procession took its departure, the coffin being borne by the mayors, elders, and official magistrates. In front of it walked the oldest inhabitant of the Ban de la Roche, carrying a cross, which Louisa had given him, to plant on the tomb, and on which the words *Papa Oberlin* were engraved in open letters.

So numerous was the concourse of people assembled on the occasion, that the foremost of the train had already reached the church of Foudai, where the interment was to take place, before the last had left the parsonage, although the distance was nearly two miles. The children of the different schools formed part of the melancholy procession, chanting, at intervals, sacred hymns, selected and adapted for the occasion. At the moment of their approaching the village, a new bell, presented by Mr. Legrand in commemoration of this day of general mourning, was heard to toll for the first time, and to mingle its melancholy sound with that of all the bells in the valley. The burying-ground was surrounded by Roman Catholic women, all dressed in mourning, and kneeling in silent prayer. On arriving at the church, the coffin was placed at the foot of the altar, and as many

persons entered as the little edifice would contain, though more than three-fourths of the company had to remain in the church-yard and the adjoining lanes. Notwithstanding the pressure of so immense a multitude, the utmost order and solemnity prevailed. Several females, who could find room nowhere else, sat down on the steps of the altar, leaning with melancholy affection against the coffin, as though anxious to cling to the very ashes of one whom they had so much revered and loved. Many distinguished individuals were present on the occasion, and several Roman Catholic priests, dressed in their canonicals, took their seats among the members of the consistory, and evidently participated in the general grief. Mr. Jaeglé then mounted the pulpit, and commenced the service by reading a manuscript of Oberlin's. dated 1784, and found among his papers after his death. It is filled with so many expressions of ardent attachment, and earnest intercession for his beloved parishioners, that I cannot refrain from inserting it.*

Fragment, written by Oberlin, in 1784.

"I was born at Strasburg on the last day of August, 1740, and baptized on the 1st of September, in the church of St. Thomas.

"During my infancy and my youth, God often vouchsafed to touch my heart, and to

* This fragment has been already alluded to, in a preceding part of the Memoirs.

draw me to himself. He bore with me in my repeated backslidings, with a kindness and indulgence hardly to be expressed.

"I arrived in this parish, in the capacity of pastor, on the 30th of March, 1767, when twenty-seven years of age.

"On the 6th of July, in the year following, God united me to that beloved woman, whom (after having received many services from her hand) you, six months ago, followed to the grave. Her name was Madeleine Salomé Witter. I have had nine children. Two, who are yet living, were born in the Ban de la Roche; the others at Strasburg. Two have already entered paradise; and seven remain in this world. On the 18th of January last, ten weeks after her last confinement, my wife, although in apparently good health, was suddenly taken from me. Upon this occasion, as upon a thousand others in the course of my life, notwithstanding my overwhelming affliction, I was upheld, by God's gracious assistance, in a remarkable manner.

"I have had all my life a desire, occasionally a very strong one, to die, owing, in some degree, to the consciousness of my moral infirmities, and of my frequent derelictions. My affection for my wife and children, and my attachment to my parish, have sometimes checked this desire, though for short intervals only. I had, about a year since, some presentiment of my approaching end. I did not pay much attention to it at the time, but, since

the death of my wife, I have frequently received unequivocal warnings of the same nature. Millions of times have I besought God to enable me to surrender myself with entire and filial submission to his will, either to live or to die; and to bring me into such a state of resignation as neither to wish, nor to say, nor to do, nor to undertake any thing, but what He, who only is wise and good, sees to be best.

"Having had such frequent intimations of my approaching end, I have arranged all my affairs, as far as I am able, in order to prevent confusion after my death. For my dear children I fear nothing; but, as I always greatly preferred being useful to others to giving them trouble, I suffer much from the idea that they may occasion sorrow or anxiety to the friends who take charge of them. May God abundantly reward them for it! With regard to the children themselves, I have no anxiety, for I have had such frequent experience of the mercy of God toward myself, and place such full reliance upon his goodness, his wisdom, and his love, as to render it impossible for me to be at all solicitous about them. Their mother was, at a very early age, deprived of her parents, but she was, notwithstanding, a better Christian than thousands who have enjoyed the advantage of parental instruction.

"Besides this, I know that God hears our prayers; and ever since the birth of our children, neither their mother nor I have ceased to supplicate him to make them faithful fol-

lowers of Jesus Christ, and labourers in his vineyard.

"And thou, O my dear parish! neither will God forget nor forsake thee. He has toward thee, as I have often said, thoughts of peace and mercy. All things will go well with thee. Only cleave thou to him, and leave him to act. O! may'st thou forget my name, and retain only that of Jesus Christ, whom I have proclaimed to thee. He is thy pastor; I am but his servant. He is that good Master, who, after having trained and prepared me from my youth, sent me to thee, that I might be useful. He alone is wise, good, almighty, and merciful; and as for me, I am but a poor, feeble, wretched man.

"O, my friends, pray, in order that you may all become the beloved sheep of his pasture. There is salvation in no other than Jesus Christ; and Jesus loves you, seeks you, and is ready to receive you. Go to him, just as you are, with all your sins and all your infirmities. He alone can deliver you from them, and can heal you. He will sanctify and perfect you. Dedicate yourselves to him. Whenever any of you die, may you die in him; and may I meet you, and accompany you with songs of triumph, in the mansions of felicity, before the throne of the Lamb!

"Adieu, dear friends, adieu! I have loved you much; and even the severity which I have sometimes deemed it necessary to exercise has arisen from my earnest desire to contribute to your happiness.

"May God reward you for your services, your good deeds, and the deference and submission which you have shown toward his poor unworthy servant. May he forgive those who have pained me by opposition. They doubtless knew not what they did.

"O, my God! let thine eye watch over my dear parishioners; let thine ear be open to hear them; thine arm be extended to succour and protect them. Lord Jesus! thou hast intrusted this parish to my care, feeble and miserable as I am. O, suffer me to commend it to thee; to resign it into thy hands. Give it pastors after thine own heart. Never forsake it. Overrule all things for its good. Enlighten them, guide them, love them, bless them all; and grant that the young and old, the teachers and the taught, pastors and parishioners, may all in due time meet together in thy paradise! Even so! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!—even so, Amen!"

After the solemn reading of this pathetic document, which was evidently intended for Oberlin's dying charge, Mr. Jaeglé read the following verses from the 103d Psalm:—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And the 14th verse of the 7th chapter of the book of

Revelation, which Oberlin had himself selected to serve as texts to the discourse to be pronounced at his funeral, conscious, as he often declared himself to be, that however numerous and useful the good works he had performed, they needed "to be washed in the blood of Christ."

The Rev. Mr. Jaeglé then delivered a discourse, which was listened to with the profoundest attention. On its conclusion the whole congregation knelt down, and repeated the following prayer:—

"All powerful God! Our days are in thy hands, and thou rulest our destinies with the most consummate wisdom. By thy will we enter into this life, and when thou ordainest, we return to dust. We render to thee our thanks for the sublime consolations which thou hast given us in the gospel of thy Son, who came to announce unto us life and immortality; consolations without which we should be given up to despair, whenever those we loved were torn from us by death, or when he approached us with his terrors.

"May the wisdom and the love of good which emanates from Thee, thou source of all good, accompany us in our pathway to eternity; that we may pass the day, as thy obedient and submissive children, conscious of having followed thy commandments, and of having preferred the welfare of our souls to the deceitful riches and pleasures of earth.

"O Lord our God! thou hast taken to thy-

self our good pastor, our good father; and thou hast given him a place in those eternal mansions prepared for the just. O, that the memory of him may remain with us! that the love of thee and of thy Son, with which he has endeavoured to inspire us, that the love of religion, (without which there is neither peace nor hope,) may never be effaced from our hearts! So that when the sleep of death shall have closed our eyelids, we may meet him whose loss we now mourn in a better world, and rejoice with him in eternal life, to which thou hast called us by our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen!"

Another hymn having been sung, the coffin was conveyed to the church-yard, where the grave was dug on a little eminence on one side of the edifice, under the shade of a weeping willow, planted over the tomb of Henry Oberlin.

The Rev. Mr. Braunwald, pastor of Goxviller, and vice-president of the consistory of Barr, then delivered an appropriate address, in which he particularly enlarged on Oberlin's domestic virtues. M. Bedel, a physician of Schirmeck, then stepped forward among the crowd, and pronounced a short eulogy on the deceased; and amid the tears of the assembled multitude, which formed, perhaps, the most eloquent funeral oration, his remains were consigned to the grave.

In delineating the character of this extraordinary man, we have not, it is true, had to trace his steps, with those of the philanthropic

Howard, through the desolate regions of Russia, nor to witness his expiring sighs in the dreary wilds of Tartary; we have not had to follow him, with the pious and indefatigable Martyn, across the sunny plains of Persia, to communicate the glad tidings of salvation to the benighted heathen, nor to see him, regardless of his own shattered health, sacrifice his life to the glory of Christ among the nations of the East:—OBERLIN's sphere of usefulness was at *home*. But there, in the secluded recesses of his beloved Vosges, the benevolent ardour of Howard, and the self-denying zeal of Martyn, were eminently displayed.

To get good from heaven, and to do good on earth, constituted, indeed, the sole aim of his life, and constrained the dedication of every talent, and the consecration of every power, to the service of his Lord and Master. Humility was intimately blended with his other Christian graces; and, deeply conscious of his own inability to advance one step in holiness, or to induce others to follow him in his path Zionward, without divine assistance, he meekly depended on, and earnestly implored, the aid of God's Holy Spirit; repeatedly uttering his favourite maxim, "Nothing without God."

So far from being actuated by the hope of reward for any personal worthiness, he disclaimed all merit of his own, and, firmly believing in the divinity, rested entirely on the propitiation of Jesus. "All in Christ" was his constant motto, and constituted the moving

principle of his exertions. "What," said he to a minister who visited him a short time before his last illness, "did not our dear Saviour suffer for us? Nothing then is difficult when we do it for *him*. To him let us wholly devote ourselves."

Through the all-sufficiency of that Saviour's atonement, he is now, undoubtedly, praising God in that kingdom of light and love, for which, while on earth, he so ardently longed; and, having exchanged the graces of time for the glories of eternity, is joining in the triumphant song of the "ten thousand times ten thousand:" "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF OBERLIN,

PASTOR OF THE HIGH ALPS.

The Ban de la Roche is enshrouded in gloom,
For its much-beloved pastor is laid in the tomb;
The groves seem to droop, and in sadness to say—
"Our crown and our glory are taken away."

The rocks of sweet Walbeck respond to the swell,
And loudly re-echo the last passing knell;
While the wild rolling torrents their murmurings blend
With the wail of the flock for their shepherd and friend.

Ah! well may this heart-rending sorrow be found,
And from valley to valley the cadence resound,
The fold may well weep as they glance on his cot,
And mournfully utter—"Our pastor is not."

His people no longer may hang on his word,
No more in the Steinthall his voice will be heard:
And its wooded seclusion is dreary and lone,
Now its light is departed—its pastor is gone.

The mourner was sooth'd by his accents of love,
And directed to mansions of glory above;
But, alas! who shall comfort the sorrowing fold,
Who the face of their shepherd no more will behold.

Yet, why should they wish the bless'd soul to delay,
So happy to shake off its shackles of clay ;
On pinions triumphant he joyfully soar'd,
And abundantly enter'd the joy of his Lord.

He has fought the good fight and his conflicts are o'er,
And sin and temptation shall harass no more !
All sorrow and sighing have taken their flight,
Exchanged for unbounded, unfading delight.